

MINERS OUT OF JAIL!



May Day Statement

THATCHER says she has taught the working class in Britain a lesson. This is certainly true. She has shown that behind the mask of parliamentary democracy lies the vicious face of capitalist dictatorship. She has shown that far from the state being neutral it is an instrument of class rule. She has also shown that the leaders of Her Majesty's loyal opposition are loyal to the bosses' system and no opposition at all.

Thatcher's pronouncements in Malaysia show that while the ruling class are glorying in their victory over the "enemy within" they are determined to make the lessons of defeat stick. One way of doing this is to make an object lesson out of those arrested in the course of the miners' strike. So in an effort to cow the working class and because those arrested were the front line fighters, the most active pickets, the rank and file leaders, the state is out to wreak vengeance on them.

Today more than 70 miners and their supporters languish in jail, some have been sentenced to terms of up to five years, and hundreds more are awaiting trial. True, some of these just happened to be 'in the wrong place at the wrong time', victims of police arbitrariness but most are outstanding militants who had the courage to meet police violence with

workers' violence, who dared form hit squads to intimidate scabs, who saw that in order to achieve victory the miners had no choice but to break the "heads we win, tails you lose" rules laid down by high court judges and the bosses' club at Westminster. Whatever offence they committed, whatever they have been found guilty of, they are class war prisoners, whom the working class movement has a sacred duty to stand by.

Typically, the leaders of the official labour movement are determined to do nothing or little about our class war prisoners. They are determined to turn a blind eye to them. The reason for this is simple: the class war prisoners are an embarrassment to these gentlemen as was the miners' strike itself. For them the miners' Great Strike was an aberration: its militancy, its almost insurrectionary aspects terrified them. And now it's over those in jail can rot as far as these fat cat bureaucrats are concerned. Oh yes, they will if pushed make the occasional pious statement about reconciliation but what really concerns them is getting back to social peace.

Many in the NUM leadership have been echoing these sentiments. George Bolton, Scottish Area Vice-President and Chairman of our CPGB, has openly declared that the coal industry must be brought "back to normal". Of course, what he means by this is getting

back to close collaboration with the NCB, back to buddy-buddying with the vile traitors and scabs who head the official labour movement. Indeed, only five days after the strike ended comrade Mick McGahey declared "I have no dispute with the leader of the Labour Party and we will continue to work together". And proof that this applied not only to Ramsay MacKinnock but to Judas Willis came when the Scottish Area NUM invited both these creatures to speak at this year's miners' gala.

Such a "back to normal" approach will not help the sacked and imprisoned specifically, nor the miners as a whole. Already it has meant the dropping of the overtime ban — one of the most important weapons left in the NUM's armoury, it has meant accepting a miserable pay deal which was on the table before the strike began, and it has meant doing everything — but everything — not to offend the scum who now rule over the Notts Area NUM. Such an approach can only encourage the NCB to press its advantage and lead to passivity. Already this has been shown to be the case: in South Wales Bedwas colliery is to close without a fight, the NCB has unilaterally announced 800 redundancies in Kent and 1,700 in the North East, and there has been the careful and cynical sacking of militants by the management in area after area. Above all we

have seen a massive demoralisation amongst miners, thousands are now flocking to accept redundancy payments, and there has been the failure to win the ballot for a 50p levy for the sacked miners — a defeat that is all the more devastating when one considers that Notts, South Derbyshire, and Leicestershire didn't vote.

Such a dire situation cries out not for getting "back to normal" but for regroupment by the militant minority so that the fight can be renewed. The only thing the Tories and the NCB understand is power. Humble delegations pleading for sacked miners, declarations by clerics, and Labourite humbug in parliament, can only convince the Tories and the NCB that they have the miners on the run. Pleading for mercy only encourages their thirst for vengeance.

In this issue we carry an interview with Neil Harrop reporting the setting up of the National Rank and File Miners' Movement — this is the sort of development we have long argued for and warmly welcome. This movement can provide the coordination for regroupment and perhaps the key to this is the task it has set itself of campaigning for the class war prisoners. This question is not simply a moral one — one of our duties to these militants — but a central tactical question from which can flow a movement which can dwarf that which freed the

Pentonville Five.

The militant miners should make themselves the hub of a national (indeed international) fight to free our militants in prison. They should go out and organise a levy to support the prisoners, those sacked, and their families. They should also quickly move to prevent the Miners' Support Groups dissolving themselves. These groups must be kept going on the basis of transforming themselves into Class War Prisoners Aid Committees. If this course is followed the militant miners will quickly spread their influence in the coalfields, rally those militants prepared to fight, crystallise a national organisation, and what is more, establish thousands of invaluable contacts with the best revolutionaries and class fighters across all industries and geographical areas.

With this done much of the ground will have been laid for a successful fightback and the staging of protest strikes to free the prisoners embracing not only the coalfields but all industries. Today Thatcher is crowing about her victory, but the miners suffered no strategic defeat. The balance of class forces may be with the bosses today but this balance is far from stable and it can be tipped through decisive and imaginative action the other way in hardly no time at all if we take up the challenge, if we organise for the class war now.



THE LENINIST

Summer Campaign

DESPITE foul lies to the contrary, our paper and the organisation behind it has no source of finance beyond its readers and supporters. The fact that *The Leninist* comes out each month, the fact that with this issue it has gone from being a twelve-pager to a sixteen-pager is entirely due to the tremendous hard work and spirit of revolutionary self-sacrifice of its supporters.

The steady process of social democratisation of our Party has accustomed almost all CPGB comrades to an easygoing, raffle tickets and bazaars, Labour Party approach to finance. In truth, comrades have lived off the fat from the militant past of our Party. They have lost all sense of what must be demanded to run, let alone build, a real communist organisation. Indeed, such has been the degeneration in our CPGB that around half of our 'members' don't even pay the paltry dues stipulated in the rules.

With this poisonous dispirited atmosphere pervading our Party it has taken a great deal of energy to convince sympathisers that they should not just give us the odd fiver or two towards our fund but that they should consider it their communist duty to donate at least 10% of their income.

Only in this way, we have told them, will revolutionary sentiment be transformed into revolutionary practice.

Some have pleaded that they have a mortgage and kids, others that they can't afford it because they are unemployed or retired. We have replied that all our supporters come up with this sum as a minimum whether they have a mortgage, kids, or only a pension or the dole as income. We have also argued that if they are serious about wanting a socialist Britain then the revolution will require far more than 10% of someone's income.

Because we have approached the question of finance as a directly political question, because we have been 'hard' about it, some bar-room revolutionaries have parted ways with us in order to seek an easy life and the company of those who admire hot air. These dilettantes we can do without. The proof of their uselessness is the fact that all their talk of groups, pamphlets, and papers has remained that — talk. On the other hand the living proof of our correctness can be seen in these sixteen pages.

Of course far from being satisfied with this achievement we are determined to push further and to demand more.

From May Day, the day of proletarians the world over, we are launching our Summer Campaign, which will be concluded by September. During these 'hot' four months our comrades will be aiming to give three weeks' total income to *The Leninist* on top of their normal donation. We are certain all comrades will meet this target. We know that many will surpass it. We say this because they are firmly convinced of our Leninist politics. They do not indulge in the pseudorevolutionary posing so common in the CPGB opposition. No, they will get on with the hard grind of revolutionary self sacrifice fully conscious that this and only this is the way to build a serious revolutionary tendency.

But this fight for finance should not and will not be confined to our supporters: all sympathisers should consider it their task to share in the difficult but rewarding work of building our paper. We hereby make an appeal to you to 'learn to squeeze blood out of a stone', we appeal to you to join our Summer Campaign.

The Editor

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LETTERS

Trotskyism

I recently argued with a fellow from *Socialist Action*. It ran thus:

SA: The CPSU is the main prop of imperialism and the most counterrevolutionary force in the world. Witness Germany, Spain, China 1927, Indonesia (date unspecified), Greece (end of WW2).

Me: But what about the existence of Cuba, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Korea, Vietnam, the combatant forces in El Salvador. Do not these progressive forces get material aid from the Soviet Union? Were it not for that aid would not these forces disappear in a bloody attack from imperialism?

SA: You cannot name me one situation where the Soviet Union openly declared to the world its support for revolutionary and national liberation movements.

I could not answer him as I felt very unsure of my ground. I know something of what went on in Greece, but nothing of the other situations he mentioned, particularly Indonesia. Could you clarify this for me and also how would *The Leninist* reply to such a position.

Another two points which I am curious about and which I feel *The Leninist* could shed light on:

1) In the book *The Stalinist Legacy* (ed. Tariq Ali) Isaac Deutscher states that the idea of 'socialism in one country' was first thought of and then developed by Stalin. Did not Lenin also develop this idea? If this is the case are the Trotskyists 'rewriting' history?

2) Various Trotskyist groups have entered the Labour Party with the reasoning that social democracy cannot be leaped over i.e. enter the social democratic party and attempt to push them leftwards and precipitate a split whereupon the Labour left will orient around the marxists. What does *The Leninist* make of this?

In solidarity
Janet Wells
London

David Sherriff replies:
Trotskyites like *Socialist Action* hate the Soviet Union and love the Labour Party. We have criticisms of our comrades in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union but to describe them as a counterrevolutionary prop for imperialism is not only untrue but a blatant example of anti-communism. These comrades have made monstrous mistakes but they have also resolutely defended the USSR against the machinations of imperialism. As to declarations in support of revolutionary and national liberation movements, our friend from SA seems to be suffering not only from anti-communism but profound ignorance — the Soviet Union and the CPSU have issued thousands of such declarations: to suggest they have not is either the result of stupidity or dishonesty. As to your other points: the idea that the USSR could build full socialism by its own efforts in isolation from the world revolution was Stalin's invention; it is not a Leninist concept. The Trotskyites

have historically been forced to enter social democratic parties because they found themselves isolated in the sectarian wilderness. In order to find some relevance after describing the world communist movement as counterrevolutionary they joined the truly counterrevolutionary bourgeois workers' parties. We think this is proof of the bankruptcy of Trotskyism.

Stalin

I notice that in your last issue (April) you make no mention of Krushchev, and yet in my experience he it was who caused a lot of comrades to leave the Party and led to the formation of all sorts of Left Communist groups.

China also was against him. In their eyes he was the most dangerous reformist of all times, and his later conduct towards China led to the split between China and the USSR — not yet healed.

As regards Stalin, if you consider carefully the tremendous task it was to steer the shaky, infant socialist state through all its teething troubles, and to defend it (successfully) against all its capitalist enemies, both external and internal, to say nothing of wavering and dubious friends, I think you should arrive at a much higher opinion of him than you appear to have. Surely the achievement of a socialist state in other countries was the responsibility of the CPs in those states rather than Stalin's. Lenin and Stalin showed them how to do it, but they preferred their own reformist ideas. As you point out the organisation of the CPs in those states is not as laid down by Lenin, nor do they accept the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat'.

I have the greatest admiration of Stalin, and find his speeches showing how he tackled the problems that arose most interesting and instructive.

It is since the eruption of Krushchev that the USSR has taken a nationalistic turn, particularly as regards the other socialist states.

So far as Yugoslavia is concerned, it was not only Stalin who opposed their brand of Communism, China and Albania opposed it. The Chinese arguments were put forth at length in *Peking Reviews* issued some time in the early Krushchev days. Incidentally, at one time British civil servants could freely visit Yugoslavia, but no other socialist countries. Seemingly the British government was not afraid of Yugoslavian communism.

I thought your article in the March issue on Women's Lib. very good. The children of working class homes went out to work for money and at the earliest possible age, irrespective of sex.

H. Brown
Manchester

Tony's Labourphilia

I quote at some length from the article by Tony Chater entitled "Thatcherism: is it a rupture with the past?", printed in the *Morning Star* of April 4 1985: "The political expression of

such a developing broad democratic alliance [against monopoly capitalism-M.B.] centered on the leading role of the organised working class movement, can only be a series of Labour governments of a new type... Further, left leadership in the unions is crucial to the fight for left leadership in the Labour Party and in a future Labour government" and "It is here [in industry-M.B.] that Communist Party and Labour Party branches are needed in the workplace, as well as sales of the *Morning Star*, the only national daily newspaper of the labour and democratic movement".

In view of these Labourite utterances from Tony Chater, I would ask those comrades who support the Chater/Costelloite faction in our Party the following questions: 1. Are you going to follow the editor of the *Morning Star* out of communist politics and into the reformist Labour party? 2. Do you see the Communist Party or "a Labour government of a new type" as the party to lead the working class to socialism in this country? and 3. Do you see the *Morning Star* as merely a "national daily newspaper of the Labour and democratic movement"?

All Communists should be aware of the Labourphilia of Tony Chater and draw the necessary conclusions from it.

Yours fraternally
Mike Bourne
Stafford.

The Best

I am a member of the Party and proud of it despite the present crisis. I bought your October issue last year at the *Militant* conference. I always buy strange left wing newspapers at CND gatherings, etc. out of curiosity. Yours is by far the best, being both dynamic and intelligent. I now understand a bit, although still not enough about what this conflict in the Party is all about. Therefore send me your next twelve issues as an antidote to *Marxism Today*.
Yours
Zoe Ellwin
Oxford

Minority Movement

The defeat of the miners has clearly shown the correctness of the call by *The Leninist* for a general strike, Councils of Action, Workers' Defence Corps, and for the formation of a National Minority Movement.

However, we must now look to the future, when there will be increasing class conflict caused by the continuing decay of British imperialism and the subsequent attacks on labour by capital. Because of this, it is imperative that workers are under no illusions about what will confront them in the years ahead — the days of concessions are over and the days of acute struggle have only just started.

With this in mind, we cannot afford to rely on the TUC and Labour bureaucracies to provide leadership (although this is not an argument to circumvent the TUC as a point of principle) for in the miners' strike they liquidated themselves into the camp of the bourgeoisie and exposed themselves to class conscious workers.

This raises the question as to how workers can unite together in order to fight class betrayal and to break the sectionalism among workers in different modes of work. This can be done by organising a National Minority Movement, a movement that could unite workers because of their objective interests, no matter where they worked. As a result, militant workers who may be isolated in their own workplace could be mobilised into this body of the most class conscious workers who could 'agitate, educate, and organise' among other workers who in turn could be drawn into such a body.

The organisation of a National Minority Movement must be undertaken without delay and based on militant miners who have learned from the strike of the necessity of such a rank and file movement. As more and more workers experience "sell-outs" by their leaders, the demand for a rank and file workers' movement will grow; to oppose opportunism in the labour movement must be one of the main aims of this movement.

Yours fraternally
Ian Topping
North Tyneside

The Best Reply

Please find enclosed £1 which is all I can at present afford being a pensioner. I was so disgusted at receiving the latest copy of *Focus* I thought this was the best reply I could give. I am awaiting the outcome of the Special Congress with interest but I am afraid that there must surely be a split with the Euros. More power to *The Leninist*. Yours in comradeship
I Presswood
Burnley

PS I have 51 years' membership in the CP.

YCLer

I read your article on the Young Communist League with great interest as I am a member of that 'organisation'. You stated that the YCL has seventy members.

Your estimate cannot be that far out. For instance in my region we have only a handful of active members. When I say active I mean that they meet but don't actually do anything. The petty bourgeois rag *Challenge* was not printed for seven months: the leadership use the excuse that many branches have not paid their debts but Brian Jones the National Organiser still manages to buy a new leather jacket.

Yours fraternally
Peter Byrne

Straight Left Recruit

Some time ago, as a new recruit to the CPGB with 'leftward' leanings, and in an area where the opposition forces in the Party were dominated by *Straight Left*, I was initially drawn towards this organisation. However, for all their self-characterisation as the 'Hard Marxist-Leninist's' of the Party, they quickly proved to be sadly lacking in any Leninist perspectives. Most obvious were their manic desire for affiliation at all costs to the 'thoroughly bourgeois' Labour

Party, and their overpowering social chauvinism on the issue of Ireland through their tailism of the opportunist Communist Party of Ireland. Also clearly apparent was their sycophancy to the Soviet Party. Each week they eagerly delve through the latest *Novosti* pamphlets and *Soviet Weekly* to see what 'Pearls of Wisdom' the Soviets have discovered. This is a poor excuse for not thinking for themselves, and in no way aids the Soviet Union or the struggle for socialism.

Straight Left have exposed themselves at London District Congress and by their absence at the London aggregate as totally unable to unite with other oppositionists in the Party.

Throughout the miners' strike they called all attempts to take the Strike on the offensive 'Trotskyist' 'Ultraleftist', and 'Abstract'. What could be more abstract than *Straight Left's* whining pleas for 'increased industrial solidarity'? They have failed to put forward any ideas as to how this can be brought about, except going cap in hand to the trade union bureaucracy.

As can be seen from the above examples, despite their incredibly formal education classes which they put so much emphasis on, they seem totally unable to relate theory to practice.

Geoff Brown
South London

Join the NCP?

In response to your appeal I enclose a small donation towards eliminating your debt.

With both the *Morning Star* and other factions supporting the BRS, do you see any hope of pulling the CPGB back to Marxism-Leninism and defeating the Euros?

Why is it not possible for all *Leninist* supporters to join the NCP as they appear to have the same political line and oppose the BRS etc? Surely your expertise and in-depth Marxist-Leninist analysis, together with theirs, would give a much greater power in the fight against capitalism and reformism.

Yours fraternally
Harry Gulliver
Manchester

Ian Mahoney replies:

Our struggle in the Communist Party has never been dependent on winning the Party 'lock, stock, and barrel' back to Marxism-Leninism. Our object has always been to forge a revolutionary wing of our Party. Thus although the Chater/*Morning Star* faction as a whole profess loyalty to the 1977 *British Road to Socialism*, this grouping contains many diffuse elements, some of which would support earlier versions of the programme and some which would support none at all. Elements of this faction, along with the most advanced sections of our class that we seek to draw into the party through our open publication, will be the basic building blocks of the reformed revolutionary Communist Party.

To desert this struggle for the sectarian wilderness,

there to join the various hordes of Trotskyite 'parties' and the politically decrepid New Communist Party (NCP) would be in effect to desert this key battle. The NCP did not split from the Party as the culmination of a period of intense ideological struggle but as a substitute for it. Ideological contest is not a luxury but an indispensable requirement of forming a truly Bolshevik party. We would point, in refuting the comrade's claim that we "have the same political line" as the NCP, to our positions over Polish coal or Afghanistan. While the NCP distort and transform the principle of proletarian internationalism into its opposite, diplomatic internationalism. *The Leninist* has consistently balanced its unconditional defence of the socialist countries with the need to criticise the errors that our comrades who hold state power may make.

Lifelong Socialist

I am 73 years old and still 'ticking'. I have been a lifelong socialist, reading the *Daily Herald*, the *Daily Worker*, *News Chronicle*, *Morning Star*, and more recently *Militant*. But as their paper spends more time castigating the Soviet Union instead of giving a lead to direct action I am giving it up. I was fortunate enough to come across your paper in Collets while in London. I have had the March and February issues and am now enclosing £5 to have the paper for the next 12 months. I will pass my old papers on to my *Militant* seller and hope it will have the desired effect.

With best wishes for the future.
Yours fraternally
Mary Evans
Bradford

Socialist Organiser

I am writing to you on behalf of *Socialist Organiser*. We have been reading your paper with some interest and feel that on some issues — the general strike, rank and file movement, popular frontism — we have a broad area of agreement.

We would like to suggest that representatives of our groups meet for some general political discussions. If you agree that discussions could be productive please let us know. Once we have agreed on discussions in principle we can discuss an agenda.

Your comradely
Clive Bradley
for *Socialist Organiser*

Jack Conrad replies:

While we are fully in favour of the widest discussions and debates in the workers' movement we really cannot at the present time see any advantage in a meeting with the Labour Party entryists of *Socialist Organiser*. During the miners' strike *SO* declared for a general strike it is true, but in practice they fudged the issue, preferring to channel the militancy of the miners into their futile attempt to transform the Labour Party. It is the same on almost every other question

faced by the working class.

As to the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, *SO* are at one with their comrades Dennis Healey and Roy Hattersley: they loath them. They call them "Stalinist police states" and refuse to unconditionally defend these precious gains of the international working class. From our own experience we have found supporters of *SO* to be amongst the most rabid anti-communists in the workers' movement in Britain. But why then do *SO* want a meeting with us? Could it be that having come out in their new *theoretical* journal with the truly amazing and ignorant claim that *Straight Left* is a faction of the Labour Party left — a claim still believed by *SO* supporters — that they found *The Leninist's* public exposure of this truly embarrassing? Yes, *SO* is so anti-communist, so totally and absolutely besotted with Labourism, that it finds itself unable to even make an informed comment on the CPGB. If this is the reason for a meeting we see no need for it. Instead we suggest to *SO* that they study back issues of our paper. Then on the basis of some knowledge of our politics and the fight for a Leninist CPGB we might get some worthwhile comment from these Labourite Trotskyites.

Good God

With Tony Chater pontificating about Marx's dual approach to religion, Irene Brenan the Catholic zealot joining the opposition, Rob Rolfe writing about the Easter spirit of renewal at Molesworth, and the *Straight Leftists* throwing in their lot with Bruce Kent when it comes to peace, what is left of our Party's supposed atheism and fidelity to Marxist materialism?

The answer seems to be precious little. Indeed only *The Leninist* has raised its small voice against the likes of the Bishop of Durham. You are quite right to point out that the Church of England is the SDP at prayer. What concerns it is the prospect of Thatcher provoking a violent swing to the left amongst British workers and the fact that we are seeing the class peace which has held us back now for decades crumbling before our eyes. The Bishops fear the class struggle like they fear the truth about class society and the inevitability of violent revolution. And this goes for the Bishop of Durham as it does for those who insist on

preaching to their flocks the "truth" of the virgin birth, the resurrection, and all that pie in the sky nonsense.

Of course the vast majority of workers don't believe in all that religious crap. So why do the CPGB opportunists insist on shoving it down our throats? While I'm no anarchist I must admit I have a sneaking sympathy for Albania (it's banned all religion) and the slogan "hang the last priest in the entrails of the last capitalist".

Fraternally
Pete Clarke
London

Denmark

We have just seen the largest strike wave in Denmark since the 1956 General Strike. The breadth of the strike took everyone by surprise — such was its potential that it even looked possible that the conservative Schlüter government could be brought down.

On April 10 we saw 100,000 out demonstrating on the streets of Copenhagen involving many sections of workers especially public sector workers in the hospitals, schools and kindergartens. There was also widespread action by industrial workers and dockers who stayed out despite the urgings of trade union functionaries who argued that there should be a return to work to protect holiday pay. The success of the strikes and demonstrations owed everything to spontaneous militancy from the working class itself rather than the leadership of the trade union bureaucrats.

Unfortunately these bureaucrats managed to reassert their authority — not least because our highly "orthodox" Communist Party failed to challenge for leadership of the strike in practice. Because of this the strike was wound down using the official trade union machinery.

But despite this the strike wave shows the potential of our working class especially when one considers that most of the LO (the TUC in Denmark) tops wanted to keep the whole thing to a one day protest in order not to frighten voters away from the social democrats. We have suffered a setback but not a defeat. What we must do now is begin the fight to build the Communist Party which is a Marxist-Leninist vanguard in more than name only.

Fraternally
H.J. Jorgen
Odense, Denmark.

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed names and addresses, and certain details.

Keep it coming

Last month our readers and supporters raised nearly £800. This has meant that we can afford with this edition to increase the size of our paper from 12 pages to 16 pages — and to keep the price the same as the 6 page *Morning Star*.

But to ensure this remains a permanent feature, to ensure that we can maintain our forward momentum we must not only maintain the level of income we have now with your help achieved but increase it. Readers looking at our editorial will see that from May Day our Summer Campaign begins — this will help as far as money goes but we also need you putting your money where your mouth is.

We would like to thank CPGB members in Scotland, South East Midlands, and London in particular for their donations. Keep it coming comrades.



THE MINERS STRIKE AND VIOLENCE

Preparing for Power

"Someone has said to the anvil
That it is made of the same material
As the hammer,
And behold, it doesn't want to be
an anvil anymore."
— Leopold Jacoby.

In times of class peace and social stability, the state's monopoly over armed force is looked on as 'natural' by the working class. It does not enter the heads of workers, who for the most part encounter the state in either benevolent or at least passively administrative roles, to organise alternative centres of violence to this body.

Whether the state, however, is watching over a society and a working class made sleepy by social peace and relative prosperity, or over a society in revolutionary crisis, its fundamental nature remains the same. At its core stay bodies of armed men organised to protect capitalist property forms. The army and police today safeguard the bourgeoisie's ownership and control over the means of social production. They are not there to protect 'society', still less the working class and the oppressed. As the ruling class attempts to offload its crisis onto our backs, the police's real role as custodians for bourgeois property rights must inevitably lead them to attack and attempt to bludgeon into submission the working class and its organisations.

Class struggle, however, is never a simple affair. When a capitalist economy moves into profound revolutionary crisis, a bourgeois state may initially use 'volunteer' organisations to terrorise the working class. Thus, in order to maintain their rule, the bosses may unleash 'shock-troops' against the workers: in Russia there were the Black Hundreds; in Germany, Hitler's SS; and in Turkey, the fascist Grey Wolves' paramilitary organisation.

This to a certain extent can introduce a contradiction. On the one hand, it may be easier under these conditions to attract workers to the banner of Workers' Defence Corps-type organisations and convince them of the need to take their own defence into their own hands. On the other hand, however, without the patient propaganda of a revolutionary party workers may come to see



Against the well trained and well armed police the miners stood no chance. Alec Long argues that what they needed and what the future demands are Workers' Defence Corps under the leadership of a revolutionary party.

the state as simply passive or at worst a reluctant collaborator with the fascist counterrevolutionaries. 'The fascists are the real problem,' reason many workers.

This unfortunately was the case in Turkey when it was gripped by revolutionary crisis throughout the '70s. The reformist organisations of the working class relatively easily diverted the workers' anger away from the social democratic government of Bülent Ecevit and against the main fascist party in Turkey, the National Action Party. Yet behind the armed thugs of the NAP was the Turkish capitalist system itself. As the Leninist wing of the Communist Party of Turkey made clear at the time:

"not strong enough to impose their own rule the fascists are having their policies implemented by Ecevit. In return the fascists by their votes permit Ecevit to remain in power while they gather forces... Either way the fascists win."

The Miners' Strike

The aura of 'neutrality' that the state creates around itself also can have important consequences. When it as a state is forced to intervene against the working class there can be two contradictory effects. Firstly, workers may be quicker to see the partisan, non-neutral nature of the state and its real role as the guarantor of the interests of the bosses. Secondly, however, they may be less eager to take practical measures of self defence than if they were confronting fascist

gangs. The illusion of the capitalist state as representing and safeguarding the 'nation' of British workers and bosses alike is a very powerful one for revolutionaries to shatter. So although many miners developed a healthy hatred for anyone in a blue uniform, they tended to account for police violence by the fact that they were 'outsiders'. The Metropolitan Police tended to be regarded as the 'worst' — the implication being that your local Mr. Plod would not have started any trouble.

The miners' strike was a major strategic confrontation between the forces of the state (the police, the judiciary, etc.) as a representative of the general interests of the ruling class, and a section of the working class. Under the social circumstances prevailing in Britain today, the state could hardly look to the fascist gangs to beat the NUM back to work. It had to step openly into the fray itself, much to the consternation of various establishment and church figures who saw their precious social peace exploded and the working class begin to tentatively reach for the weapons that they will one day turn on the capitalist system itself.

Thus 'critics' of government policy such as Heath, the Bishop of Durham, or Pym were not and are not potential 'allies' of the working class as both the Euros and the *Morning Star* in our own Party sought to claim. What worried these type of people was the ferocity of the 12 month battle and the fact that the bourgeois state intervened

so openly and unambiguously. They fretted for their system, not for the miners. They are yet to adjust to the harsh realities of the late 20th Century and a British capitalism that is getting itself into all sorts of economic trouble.

The Choice

"There was always also a massive contradiction running through the strike. The macho image portrayed by the men on the picket lines contrasted with the role played by the women, many of whom were involved in non-violent civil disobedience and passive direct action... The style of protest and struggle will have to change even if it is only to learn from Greenham women on how to be arrested."

(Hywel Francis — *Marxism Today*, April 1985.)

Hywel Francis is a liar. There was no "contradiction" between the miners' wives and their husbands. They were united on their common interests as working class men and women and were thus, unlike the muddy feminist mystics at Greenham Common, a real threat to the bourgeois state. As Mari Collins of Kent Area Women Against Pit Closures pointed out in *The Leninist* of February of this year: "The police are just as violent with the women and children as they are with the men."

The 'floppy' stunts of Greenham played no part in the miners' wives' struggle: it was far too serious for that.

Comrade Francis and his Eurocommunist co-thinkers, however, distort reality in order to attempt to subordinate the miners' militancy to bourgeois 'public' opinion and respectability.

He is right on one thing however. The miners during their battle were faced with a choice about their "style of protest and struggle", but it was not between ways of being arrested as he goes on to imply. It was between whether the miners were in a position to allow the police to arrest them or whether they could effectively see them off.

Most organisations on the British left simply counselled the miners on different methods of being arrested. The Socialist Workers' Party wanted people lifted off mass undefended pickets which shoved and pushed aimlessly at the disciplined ranks of the police: the Eurocommunists wanted people carted off like passive sacks of potatoes à la Greenham. Either way militants end up in the police vans at the end of the day.

The choice we posed was rather different. We argued that if workers organised themselves and their defence, then it would be a question of whether they allowed the filth to arrest anybody or not.

Slugging it Out

Despite the incredible heroism of the miners' pickets and their magnificent willingness to stand toe-to-toe with the blue filth and slug it out, for the most part miners' pickets were contained and made ineffective by the police. A few brave miners, however, frustrated by their lack of success, took the struggle onto a qualitatively higher level and began to organise the hit squads that were responsible for acts of minor (and not so minor) sabotage.

We welcomed this development and called for the phenomena to be generalised and the scope of these squads to be expanded. Why? Because as we wrote at the time:

"A disciplined, organised, and purposive body of people can stand against and defeat a far larger mass if that mass is lacking in discipline, in technique and is without effective leadership." (*The Leninist*, October 1984).

Consequently, the hit-squads were significant for two

reasons:

Firstly — they advanced and built on the willingness of the miners not to be bound by the niceties of the bosses' laws.

Secondly — these hit squads evidently had quite a high degree of organisation — precisely the missing ingredient that we pointed to in the miners' confrontations with the police.

We wholeheartedly applauded the development of these hit squads. Where we had criticisms they were criticism of their smallness, their limited scope and effect, but never the actions themselves. We pressed for these hit-squads to transform themselves into Workers' Defence Corps-type bodies in order to start to draw the mass of strikers into the day to day defence of their ranks against the police attacks. This unfortunately never happened. These squads mostly remained isolated from the mass of strikers and, consequently, in some cases, actually provoked hostility from the majority of miners.

So what was missing?

The Party — the Missing Link

As our interview with a member of a hit-squad makes clear, without a clear political lead coming from a working class party on the issue, even the best militants must retreat either into demoralisation or even contempt for the mass of more backward strikers:

● The comrade has 'lost trust' in the men — they have 'nowt in them'. He does not yet understand that in any struggle, at any time, there will be a minority of workers who are more advanced than the mass. The key task is to *organise* that minority and equip them with the *political arguments* to enable to sway the majority. Leading simply by example is never enough.

● The comrade feels himself 'isolated' and demoralised. He has no opportunity to link up with other advanced militants around the country who have come to the same militant conclusions as he has. He is alienated from the rest of the

men; he doesn't understand their apathy, they do not understand his, what seems to them, recklessness.

● The comrade's bravery is beyond question. He would form a hit-squad again despite the personal risks. Yet on what basis would he do it? To compensate for the political backwardness of the mass of miners, the comrade proposes simply more secrecy.

Yes, of course we are in favour of maintaining security in the face of the bourgeois state, but we do not believe that sealing yourself off from the mass of workers is the solution to their lack of political sophistication. Secrecy here becomes a substitute for winning the political arguments for self-defence amongst the mass of miners.

What this comrade needs, what all militants need, is a Leninist Communist Party.

Party, Party...

A *Leninist Communist Party* during the miners' strike would have acted as the collective memory of the class. It would have remembered the lessons of Methil, Fife and impressed on the miners that the way to bring peace to their communities and to make their picket lines effective was to start to organise their own violence. The class would not have had to repeat that example and to painfully relearn lessons that had already been taught.

A *Leninist Communist Party* could have ensured that workers' anger was not misdirected or dissipated against either fascist groups or, simply, the 'Met' as opposed to our local 'bobbies'. The Party would have ensured that the workers understood that their enemy was the capitalist state, that their task at the end of the day was to settle accounts with *that body* in order to impose their own rule.

A *Leninist Communist Party* during this present period of retreat would have ensured that the lesson of workers' defence was not lost again. Obviously the call for workers' defence organisations is a less

'immediate' demand given the end of the miners' strike — it really would be quixotic sloganising to call on NUPE or CPSA members to form their own hit squads now!

But a *Leninist Communist Party* would take that lesson of workers' defence and nurture it. It would ensure that the vanguard and advanced sections of the class would never forget it. It would study the art of war and military tactics in the organisations thrown up during the strike. It would ensure the survival of these organisations in different forms until such time as the tempo and heat of the class struggle demands their deployment again.

The lessons of the miners versus the state, with the help of the Party, thus become part of the cumulative property of the entire class.

The Hammer

The miners' violence was a taste of things to come. When we look to the hit squads and the miners' violence, both organised and unorganised, we see the embryos of the workers' militias that will one day win and defend working class state power.

Without a *Leninist Communist Party* however, socialism will remain a dream — a very beautiful one, but a dream nevertheless. Both for the advancement of the struggle in the short-term, for the teaching and the consolidation of the lessons that spring forward from the struggle and for our ultimate goal of revolution, our class needs a *Leninist Communist Party*. Without a *Leninist Communist Party*, the working class have nothing.

The anvil aspires to be a hammer. But only a *Leninist Communist Party* can ensure that the working class hammer strikes its blows with sufficient accuracy and force to snap the back of the bourgeois class clean through. We call on all militant miners and all working class partisans to join us in the struggle to forge just such a Party.

Interview

Heroism and Limitations The Hit Squads



One of the most impressive aspects of the miners' Great Strike was the spontaneous organisation of hit squads. Our interview with who was responsible for forming a hit squad from the miners at colliery in Scotland shows the limitation of these squads as well as their heroism. For communists the task is clear: 'next time' hit squads must be transformed into Workers' Defence Corps and given a clear revolutionary perspective.

The Leninist: Why did you feel it was necessary to organise a hit squad? Weren't the traditional methods of industrial struggle working?

Reply: In our area a few men decided to go back to work and we thought we weren't doing enough. With a small amount of miners working at the time we thought that if we could 'nip it in the bud' there and then it would stop more men returning — it would scare them.

No, traditional methods of struggle weren't working. At the beginning of the strike most mass picketing was a morale booster. On the picket line all the men stood back and did nothing. It's the few up front, the few that do any work, any shoving and pushing, that get arrested. We also felt we weren't getting enough pickets out. I mean, for every picket there's ten striking miners sitting at home! So we had to make the most of the numbers we had.

You see, early on in the strike when there were only a few scabs they were getting police protection at their houses. We had to stop them getting to work, so we thought we'd break a few windows to deter them or give them a good hiding. You needed a few people for that type of work really, to go undetected.

The Leninist: On that question of numbers, did you find there was an ideal number?

Reply: As for numbers, well, it depends what you want to do really, doesn't it. At scabs' houses the police won't let you near. Police are actually convincing the scabs to go back to work. When they start back then the police persuade them to keep on going in if the scabs hesitate... We called a meeting in a back room. Word got round individually that we were interested in forming a hit squad and around 30 people turned up. When we talked about it everybody seemed enthusiastic. But we never really got down to plan together, like. When we approached them for real support they'd lost their bottle. There's been windows broken here and there but that's it.

I told them all to turn up on the picket line in their orange

NCB overalls, then the police wouldn't be able to say — 'get that one over there in the red shirt and jeans'. They couldn't identify you that way — but nobody listened...

My attitude to the miners around my area has changed. I'm still fighting for me and my family but I've lost trust in the men. They've got 'nowt in 'em'. When I came out on remand from jail, at the centre they didn't talk to me. Whether they didn't know what to say, I don't know. But nobody ever mentioned the idea of hit squads or the incident from that time on. I feel isolated in some way. They don't understand that if they'd helped me in the first place, my arrest would never have happened.

I mean, it's different in Yorkshire where you have about 60,000 miners, there's more militants there. Down in this centre, we've only sixty or so miners and so it's left to a few of us. Nobody else was ready...

Well, there was nobody that would condone violence is there? If Kinnock and the Labour Party was to support it, they'd lose votes. If it wants to win the next election, how can it denounce the violence of the police force now?

The union back us in everything we do. They do support us in what we do. But if you get caught it's your own fault, they couldn't support violence publicly...

You can't really compare 1926 to now. You had an entirely different workforce back then — a whole bunch of men who'd just come back from the army, who were militarily trained and disciplined. They're not like that now. It takes them all they've got to get out of bed in the mornings to picket.

I'd form a hit squad again. If I did something like that again though, I'd know what I'm doing. Nobody would be able to pin it on me. Though the evidence they've got on me for this trial is nil. Ten people interrogated me the night they took me in. Maybe it was just as well there was only three of us, because we stuck together, never gave an inch. We were dedicated, you see?

My wife still doesn't know it all, we had to be very secretive about these meetings. What you don't know you can't tell!

No rifles and bayonets

DURING THE 1926 General Strike the CPGB led the fight for Workers' Defence Corps. In Methil, Fife the District Trades and Labour Council, in acting upon this communist call, proceeded even before the strike began to set up a well-organised local Workers' Defence Corps. At the beginning of an appeal for volunteers sent out over the names of the Chairman and Secretary, the Trades and Labour Council boldly declared in its inimitable way:

"Possibly some may raise objections to the formation of such a body on the grounds that it is a military body which will be required to use rifles and bayonets. We desire to clear that misapprehension away.

"No rifles and bayonets will be used for the simple reason that no rifles and bayonets are available to the Trades and Labour Council." (Contemporary leaflet.) The implication was clear: if they had had such weapons then they would have issued them.

The Methil Workers' Defence Corps was enlarged to 700 after the initial level of recruitment (150) proved inadequate to deal with police violence against pickets. Following baton charges on Friday May 7 and Monday May 10 a total of fifteen were arrested. The Workers' Constables (as they were later called) carried iron bars and pickaxe handles and by their discipline were able to prevent police from further disrupting picketing in their area of operations.

According to the leading communist in Methil at the time, after the expansion in the Workers' Defence Corps:

"There was no more police interference because the Defence Corps was reorganised and paraded the streets in columns of four under commanders: ex-service NCO's. A great sight and not without preparations to 'repel boarders'." (Dave Proudfoot, unpublished letter dated May 24 1926.)

The lessons on the front

of workers' self defence comes down to us from 1926. Clearly, Workers' Defence Corps were and are essential to protect pickets against the police. But in addition, as the leaflet quoted from above also makes clear to its 1926 readers:

"The duties of a Workers' Defence Corps are acting as stewards at working class meetings... protect working class speakers from molestation and attack... acting as marshals for workers' processions... and to protect Trade Union and Cooperative Property..." The comrades in Methil were sure that "the workers must rely on their own organisations for protection." And to be certain of their readers' commitment, these comrades finally recalled events of 1925:

"Remember the brutal attack by the police on the Welsh miners last year and make your decision that by organising a Workers' Defence Corps attempts of that nature will be frustrated."

A Promising Start

THE Rank and File Miners' National Conference, held in Sheffield on April 13 and attended by around 120 miners and pit women, was a promising start in the fight to forge a genuine rank and file movement in the NUM. The main thrust of the conference was the need to campaign to win the reinstatement and amnesty for all sacked and jailed men and what was pleasing about this initiative was that it sprang from the ranks of the NUM itself, unlike the BLOC sponsored campaign or the RCP's hypocritical anti-union binge on sacked and victimised men.

A resolution passed at the conference makes it clear that the movement will fight a militant campaign for their sacked and imprisoned comrades, pushing for:

"... direct action by the union — overtime bans, work to rules, strike action — in pursuance of these aims. It will work to win financial support for the victimised and imprisoned."

As our interview with Neil Harrop from Kent makes clear, this initiative has come from the rank and file of the NUM in response to the inertia and lack of any sort of action from the national leadership. On March 28 sacked miners and their supporters lobbied the NUM NEC in Sheffield demanding action from their leadership in defence of the sacked and imprisoned lads. The report back from the delegation that went in to meet the NEC painted a bleak picture of the state of the miners' leadership.

Two positions seem to have emerged: the confused, and the demoralised and confused. For the confused camp, Scargill essentially wanted to know from the sacked men 'what do you want us to do, lads?'; while in the demoralised wing, Jack Taylor and others seemed to be edging towards the position of 'we're beaten, what can we even hope to do?'

At the end of the day, the only advice from the men that the miners voted for to lead them appeared to be 'carry on with the collections yourselves.' The national leadership totally reneged on its responsibility to provide national leadership, good, bad, indifferent, or of any kind on this vital question. They have left the class war prisoners and casualties totally isolated.

Jack Collins, Secretary of Kent Area NUM, has called for a more aggressive response:

"The campaign to release those in jail and the reinstatement of all those who have been victimised is now the property and priority of the movement — The Fight Goes On. Don't disband the Support Groups." (Statement, March 11 1985).

Our readers should now orientate their support committees, if they have survived the national demobilisation of the SWP, to the campaign being launched by the National Rank and File Miners' Movement (NRFMM) for the sacked men and for amnesty.

Patchy

Some miners at the conference wanted to push the movement further than simply to the campaign mentioned above. It



The rank and file must now organise themselves

was argued, quite correctly, that the directionless nature of the NUM leadership was not just coming out now at the end of the strike, but had been evident throughout the dispute in a lack of a winning strategy from the leadership.

Thus a resolution proposed and seconded by young miners Peter Kelly and Shaun Evans called for taking on board not simply the fight for the sacked and jailed men, but also the platform that the new movement should press for the

democratisation of the union and the recallability of all officials, for a shaking up of the 'gothic' structure of the NUM and also to make the movement one explicitly committed to the perspective of the "complete abolition of capitalism."

This resolution however was quite convincingly voted down by the conference. The groundwork for such a proposal simply had not been done, a problem stemming from the fact that there is no genuine Communist Party in Britain

today. This means that the idea of a National Minority Movement-type body springing from the NUM's ranks, an idea implicit in Peter Kelly and Shaun Evans's resolution, has not been fought through and won among reasonably wide sections of the NUM. Although obviously correct, the idea is still the property of a very small minority.

The Future

The struggle of the victimised men, as we make clear on the

front page of this issue, must become the property of the entire working class movement. Although it is quite correct for the NRFMM to campaign for action on this issue from within the NUM, it must also have the perspective of broadening the fight to draw in other sectors into the battle to defend these class war prisoners and casualties. The miners' fight, as we never tire of saying, was a fight for all workers. All workers should now be drawn into the campaign to defend the sacked and imprisoned men from that strategic battle. Industrial solidarity from workers in other unions was often effectively stymied by their leaderships. Also, Scargill showed himself unwilling or unable to reach over the bureaucrats' heads to directly organise the rank and file of other unions into solidarity actions: the NRFMM however has the chance to go beyond the rhetoric of the NUM leadership. They are not hidebound by official structures, they are not tied by the strings of social position and outlook to the leaderships of other unions in the same way as Scargill. Their natural links are with the rank and file of other unions, many of whom showed themselves more than prepared to link up with the miners. Let's now see those links forged, concretised and action built towards national cross industry strikes and work to rules for these sacked and imprisoned heroes of the struggle.

Campaign

We do not glorify rank and file activity simply for the sake of it. We want to see that rank and file initiative tied to clear, unambiguous revolutionary leadership in the same way as it was through the National Minority Movement of the 1920s. We thus totally oppose rule book manoeuvring to fight political problems in the union such as the Spencerism in Notts.

To us now the task is to consolidate those miners and their supporters who are committed to the NMM-type idea into a force capable of campaigning for it through the production of leaflets and pamphlets, etc.

Neil Harrop was disappointed at the size of the conference — and certainly it would have been pleasing if more had turned up. Despite that we, alongside Neil, consider it to be a good beginning. We also believe that it was correct for the position of Peter Kelly and Shaun Evans to be at least raised and argued for in that it showed in some senses where the movement must eventually go (although of course we would disagree with some points in Peter and Shaun's resolution — most notably over the question of expulsions).

At some stage the NRFMM must face its future. Significantly, this conference was condemned by the national NUM leadership who are themselves doing little or nothing for their victimised men.

Ian Mahoney

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Interview

Which Way Forward?

NEIL HARROP IS ONE of the new leading militants in the Kent coalfield. He has been one of the main agitators for a national rank and file movement in the NUM and has attempted in Kent to get such a movement off the ground.

The Leninist: Why was there felt to be a need for a rank and file movement in the NUM?

Neil Harrop: We need a clear commitment from the rank and file. There are a lot of issues, and especially around the amnesty campaign, that only the rank and file can get off the ground. The leadership don't seem to be interested in it whatsoever. We've met Scargill and people from the NEC — there were several people from the NEC who clearly showed that they had no ideas to put forward whatsoever in order to help these sacked lads out.

So we've just taken it forward ourselves — if the leadership won't lead, its down to the rank and file.

The Leninist: Are there lessons from the past and in particular from the experience of the National Minority Movement that are applicable for today's struggle?

Neil Harrop: Well yes. I mean the rank and file movement we're trying to get off the ground, we don't want it lifting off on a Broad Left basis. The Broad Left is put together purely as an electoral body and when it comes to action from the Broad Left you find it usually fragments and it breaks up. The Broad Left in South Wales and Scotland broke down and South Wales actually copped out on the strike.

We'd like to see the rank and file movement lift off as a fighting movement inside the

NUM, pressuring the leadership and organising action. The right is well organised and that's the only direction that Scargill gets any pressure from. So the left has got to organise as well. Its not going to come from any officials — Scargill just going to put his word out and that's going to be it.

So we've got to organise from the bottom up and hopefully we can organise to at least put some pressure on to get things done.

The Leninist: Criticism has been leveled at the April Rank and File Miners' National Conference because it is claimed its scope was too limited. What is your view?

Neil Harrop: There were resolutions that went to the conference that argued for wider issues to be considered by the movement — and it was clearly a good programme that went all the way. But I don't believe that that was the time for it. If we had had a lot more people there to get the aims over it would have been possible. The people that were there (the conference had something like 120 participants — *The Leninist*) were there solely around the campaign for the sacked and victimised miners plus obviously the fight against pit closures and the anti-trade union laws, and not for anything else.

The Leninist: As a Socialist Workers' Party miner, could you give us your party's view of the

conference and the prospects for a rank and file movement.

Neil Harrop: The SWP's line on it was that a rank and file movement cannot be built at this time, we're still in the downturn and that all we'll do is demoralise the workers in that we'll be setting aims we know cannot be achieved.

So they basically want to fight around the amnesty campaign and actually fighting the smaller issues at pit level to build to inject confidence back into the workforce. If we have small victories within the pit, that'll build the confidence of the workforce and we can go on to bigger victories from there. They don't believe that now is the time to build a rank and file movement. And I think from the size of the April 13 conference, despite what I've said before, there might be some truth to it.

The Leninist: If it does get off the ground though, what would you like to see as some of its long term aims and objectives?

Neil Harrop: Obviously, if it does come together, then the points in some of the resolutions that were put to conference calling for democratisation of the NUM and for the accountability of officials would be what I'd like to see going forward. Also I'd like to see it as a spring board to link up with militants from other industries — either we absorb them or they absorb us into one of their organisations.

THE LENINIST

Supplement

A defeat: but not a strategic one



In March we invited a number of supporters and contacts to attend a day-school the main item being to discuss the lessons of the miners' Great Strike. A comrade from *The Leninist's* Editorial Board gave the following opening.

THE FIRST thing that we would say about the miners' Great Strike is that while it had many features of past industrial struggles, it gave us a glimpse of what is in prospect for Britain in the future. There has not really been a strike like it in British history. Obviously we have got 1926 to compare it with, we have got strikes in the earlier '20s, we have got the great strike wave between 1910 and 1914. But this strike lasted a year; this strike saw well over 10,000 people arrested; this strike saw the British police force come out in a way that we have never seen before.

We have seen police clobbering miners over their heads, not just with a normal truncheon; not just your Dixon of Dock Green type toughed up, but we have seen the police adopt many European tactics. And of course those familiar with events in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland can see many parallels between the policing methods that have been employed in this strike and the lessons learnt by the British Army in their struggle against the forces of the Republican

movement.

Now, in the same way that when Lenin looked at the Councils of Action in Britain just after World War I and called them embryonic soviets we too can now, I think, look back at this strike and see embryonic forms of future working class state power. In the formation of hit squads we see embryonic organs of working class state power in the forms of workers' militias. In the form of the Women Against Pit Closures movement we see in embryonic form a mass working class women's movement. And of course in Miners' Support Groups we see embryonic soviets.

The fact that this strike has thrown up these features, the fact that it lasted a year, the fact that there have been 10,000 arrests and the fact that the bourgeoisie itself threw into the fray not just a newly organised national police force fully equipped with all the paraphernalia of Northern Ireland but also of course that it was prepared to spend at least three billion pounds, was prepared to sacrifice the tax concessions to the British middle class in the Budget for the sake of beating the miners shows the importance of this strike, not just for revolutionaries, not just for the miners, but for all classes all strata in British society. So we are not just dealing with statistics here, we are not just trying to say that this strike lasted a year, we are not just trying to say there were 10,000 arrests, and that x amount of money was spent.

What we are trying to indicate by calling it a Great Strike is that British politics has changed.

This strike definitely marks a watershed in the development towards a British revolution, towards the situation where we can start to challenge for state power.

It marks the end of consensus politics, definitely. Consensus politics in Britain has been wobbling and cracking in front of our eyes. I think this strike has washed it away. And in place of that consensus politics we see class war politics.

Internationalism

One thing we must mention before going further is the internationalism of the strike. The strike was not seen by workers across the world as simply a British affair. And workers in Britain especially of course the most militant sections of the miners themselves, also saw as the strike developed clear international implications.

Comrades in the CGT did not just donate money and food to the struggle but on occasions sabotaged railways that were carrying coal destined for export to Britain. You saw many actions like that across Europe.

Of course we do not have a rosy eyed view about international class struggle. We do not have a rosy eyed view about proletarian internationalism. After all in Germany one of the largest unions, the metalworkers'

union (about twice as big as the AUEW in this country), refused to deliver any solidarity to the NUM whatsoever because of Scargill's supposed communism. In the same way we have got the example of Poland in front of us, which performed, as I think has been quite legitimately described a scab role. It did not just maintain its export of coal to Britain but actually increased it throughout the period of the strike. How this contrasts with the CGT in France, the Australian seamen, and Dutch dockers and wasn't it inspiring to see the miners march with the nationalist masses through the streets of Derry and Belfast recently. The response that they got from the nationalist community gives full testimony to the internationalism that has developed in the six counties of Northern Ireland.

Historic

All of what I have said so far shows that the miners' Great Strike was historic. I think we can see its historic importance by comparing it and contrasting it with not only 1926 and the events of the General Strike, but also the whole period that 1926 was a culmination of. In other words, the militant strike wave, the wave of militancy that characterised British politics, from 1910 to 1914 and then from the end of World War I until 1926.

Now, this militant wave from 1910 to 1926 was the product of the relative

decline of British imperialism at that time. Up to World War I there was a great deal of pressure from Germany and the United States; competition was becoming very fierce. British imperialists found it impossible simply to turn to the Empire as the solution and were forced, to a degree, to turn on their own working class. As a result of that they attacked working class living standards, they attempted to hike up the rate of exploitation.

As we know, that wave of militancy was interrupted in 1914 by the outbreak of World War I, but it reasserted itself in 1917, and 1918, and then obviously took off towards 1926. But the fact was that not only was 1926 a defeat, not just obviously for the miners who lost after their 7 month lockout, but it was a defeat for the entire working class.

Now, we have made the point in *The Leninist* that the key to understanding this defeat is not simply a question that the bourgeois state was able to outmanoeuvre the British working class. It was not a simple question that the leadership of the TUC were traitors who sold the strike down the river. If the British imperialist state, if the capitalists had been forced to continue their offensive that had more or less characterised the previous twenty years, then the British working class would have been forced, whether it liked it or not, to take up again the cudgels of class war. But that was not the case; the fact was that from every year from 1926 until the outbreak of World War II, those in employment saw their living standards rise. And even the miners, who suffered a pay reduction in 1926-27, saw their wages rise from 1928, again, until 1939. And I think that statistic is the key to understanding why 1926 was so important because what it represented was not just a political defeat, it represented an end of a period of militancy, because as in essence the stimulus that produced that militancy was removed. The results were not just a decline in militancy.

The Communist Party, which was recruiting not quite hand over fist during 1925-6 but was certainly growing substantially from 2,000 to about 5,000 — but far more importantly its peripheral, which could be described as 'mass', was punctured. We went from a situation in 1926 where the National Minority Movement (the National Minority Movement while not being a Communist Party front was led by Communist Party members for example, Harry Pollitt) went from having a million members affiliated to it, to where it was an empty shell until it was finally closed down in 1929. The Communist Party membership did not collapse; but it did change in character; partially that was a reflection of the defeat; for example, I think the statistic that we quoted in *The Leninist* (April 1985) said that — round about 1930 — about half the membership consisted of either unemployed workers or housewives. While in 1926 the Communist Party was based on the core of the working class, amongst miners; amongst engineering workers; amongst transport workers; it was reduced to a situation of where its unemployed workers (who were often ex-engineering workers, ex-miners, ex-transport workers, the sacked and victimised heroes of 1926), carried on the militant tradition into the 1930s, above all in the shape of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement of Wal Hannington, the great hunger marches, the demonstrations, and all the rest of it. But the fact was that the Communist Party itself was reduced to a very isolated position. Obviously we know about the problems of the so-called Third Period, of the calling of social democrats 'social fascists' and all the rest of it. But even despite that political mistake, the Communist Party really was not in a position to have done much about it; it was going to be isolated whether it changed its political line or not. The fact was, though, that its political line exacerbated that problem rather than mitigated against it. So with that brief historical view of the period around 1926, I think we can then take a step

forward and look at the period that we are living in now.

Today

I think comrades in this room, with a few honourable exceptions, are my age or thereabouts. We have been born into a period of the most unprecedented capitalist boom in the history of this planet, and that is no exaggeration. Comparing the growth rates of capitalism on a world scale, say, for the last thirty years, you will not find an equivalent period in the history of capitalism. Even Britain, which has perhaps one of the most sluggish growth rates of any of the major imperialist powers, even its growth rates in this period have far outmatched anything that it saw even in the heyday of the great industrial revolution, when I do not think it even recorded a growth rate of more than two per cent. But anyway, the fact is that it has not just recorded a growth rate that is quite significant. The fact is that this growth rate was carried on for about twenty five years, which is quite a phenomenal situation with capitalism.

The results of this can be seen in people's lifestyles, in people's outlooks, and all the rest of it. We saw the situation where, from the 1950s into the late 1960s, even into the early 1970s, British politics experienced a remarkable stability. We saw the development of what was called Butskellism, the idea that the Labour Party and the Conservative Party were really no different was not just a myth, there was an awful lot of truth in it. The fact was that these bourgeois politicians could with the same policies promise increasing living standards. Now, this had the effect of making reformism not just penetrate the mass of workers but the vanguard of the working class as well.

We know that that situation slowly but surely started to decay from at least the late 1960s onwards, that the basis for that consensus politics, the basis for that social peace slowly but surely eroded. As a result of that, really I think from the Wilson government in the late '60s, you saw efforts by the capitalist class to at least reduce the bargaining power of the working class. You first of all saw Barbara Castle's 'In Place of Strife'. We then saw following that Heath's Industrial Relations Act. Both had the same idea of not smashing the working class but in essence tipping the balance to enable the bourgeoisie to raise the rate of exploitation, to shift power in the system away from the working class. A number of different methods were tried after the Industrial Relations Act. We then had the Labour Party's Social Contract, which ironically (certainly at its earlier stages) was the most successful in tipping the balance with the connivance and agreement of the trade union bureaucracy. Of course given the nature of the trade union leaderships they could not resist the mounting pressure of the rank and file. We saw the so-called Winter of Discontent and living standards to a degree catch up with what had been.

But anyway, after the Winter of Discontent came the election of Thatcher, we saw her come in with not just a programme of legislation but with the guts, determination and the lack of choice necessary to ensure that this time the legislation stuck, that this time there was no giving in, that this time the fight was carried through and the working class suffered defeat.

In the initial period of the Thatcher government living standards rose; and in fact they are still rising in real terms for those in work. A number of sections of the working class, as sections, have been defeated. I think the most notable sectional struggle in the early period of the Thatcher government was the steelworkers, they took on the Thatcher government and put up a magnificent fight. Unfortunately they had an awful leadership: it not only caved in at the end of the day, but accepted a deal in which half the jobs in the steelworks disappeared.

Thatcher and the bourgeoisie could not be contented with picking off the

working class section by section: that was not the way forward and they were quite well aware of that fact. They had to confront the working class as a class; they had to forced down the wages of the class as a whole. And to do that they obviously prepared very, very well to confront the miners. The miners for good reason have been described as the guards' regiment of the working class. Their idea was if they could smash the NUM then no other section could stand in their way. This is what lay behind the miners' strike.

The Strike

We can now have a look at the strike itself. I think what we can conclude in the aftermath of the strike, that while it was defeated, it has not produced the results that Thatcher and the Tories wanted. What they wanted was a strategic, decimating defeat. While they have no doubt inflicted a very, very serious defeat, the truth is that the NUM is intact, many militants are itching to reorganise and fight back, and what is more, the leadership of the NUM has not done a Bill Sirs but has stood on a principled intransigent position. This said it is important to criticise the leadership. While it was intransigent, while it has not caved in and agreed to massive closures, massive job losses, the fact is that it fought the strike in ways inherited from the days of consensus or at least from the early 1970s. In other words, what Scargill was after was a repetition of the sort of victory that was secured in 1970 and 1972.

Because of this the whole strategy of the NUM suffered. In essence I think it suffered from the idea that as a section, the NUM could do it by itself. OK, Arthur Scargill said on numerous occasions: "come and join us," "fight alongside us," "fulfill your pledges," but the fact was that it remained on the level of rhetoric. While calling for workers to join the miners he was not prepared to break from the TUC in order to achieve that. He was not prepared to challenge directly the leadership of other unions to achieve that. He was not prepared to send out miners en masse — not just as pickets, but as political agitators — he was not really prepared, when it came down to it, to compromise his links not only with the TUC but with left-talking union leaders such as Buckton, Knapp, Todd, and Slater. He was prepared to accept their token solidarity but was not prepared to condemn it as only token solidarity and demand more and fight for it.

Now, the reasons for this are relatively simple. While the bourgeoisie has fulminated against Arthur Scargill for being a 'revolutionary', have branded him as being the greatest subversive in Britain, the truth is that while Scargill is significantly different from people like Sirs, nonetheless he still is only a reformist; a left reformist no doubt, a reformist with syndicalistic inclinations, syndicalistic coloration, but nonetheless Arthur Scargill is a reformist. And to suggest anything else would be to fool ourselves. He was willing to use militant trade union tactics, but he was not prepared to use revolutionary tactics. And even here there were weaknesses. I think an indication of this is the question of picketing and violence.

Scargill did not once condemn picket line violence; in fact, he made it a principle that if you cross a picket line you get what you deserve. But away from the picket line on several occasions, for example with the Wilkie incident, he actually came out and condemned violence. I think that gives you an idea of both the different nature of Scargill on the one hand but the similar nature of Scargill on the other hand, compared with other trade union leaders. His allies in the trade union movement, such as in the T&G, while they were ever ready to preach about 'big bangs' and all the rest of it, when it came down to it were not even prepared to link in the miners strike with their own members who were in struggle. The most notable examples of that were the dockers. Those strikes by

the dockers, certainly the first one, really did get the bourgeoisie worried. The idea of a strike wave starting to embrace more than the NUM really started to give them the heebie-jeebies. Not only that, but we also saw the situation at British Leyland, where the same laws were being deployed against the carworkers as were being employed against the NUM. No attempt whatsoever was made to link the two. In fact the opposite was the case. Certainly when the T&G pulled out its dockers it made a very pointed declaration that 'this strike has got nothing to do with the current coal dispute, this strike is simply about the dock labour scheme'. And as a result of that it ended in a most disgraceful situation of where in order to preserve the dock labour scheme T&G members were moving scab coal into Britain. In the same way, when it came to the NUR and ASLEF: many fine words came from Ray Buckton and Jimmy Knapp, but we know, that that was about all they did deliver. Take Coalville: in London — and we certainly know as a fact — that workers in King's Cross did not know much about what was going on in Coalville. When the railway unions called a day of action the members in London did not know about it, and when they found out about it they were protesting to their national executives and taking unofficial action on that day in order to stop the rails. Examples like that give you an idea of the sort of solidarity that was delivered, but more importantly, the real point about it is that it also shows the limitations of Scargill, because Scargill was not protesting about it, he was not organising agitation teams of NUR militants, ASLEF militants alongside NUM militants. But more important than that, the fact was that Scargill in a way very remarkably like Jack Collins as was shown by our interview, while he in no way, shape, or form is a sellout merchant, lacked what was needed, and that was a political strategy for victory. That as far as Scargill was concerned really all the NUM needed to do when it came down to it was go on strike, stop the production of coal, send out flying pickets, and then sit there intransigently until the coal stocks got down to the proverbial molehills (as we were constantly told that that was all the coal stocks were), and eventually the country would come to a halt, the government would give in, and, as he said in the early part of the strike, that then the years of Thatcherism would be rolled back. The truth was that the government obviously was not, as we have shown, playing that sort of game.

The government was well aware that this was no sectional struggle. What the government was out to do was not simply to break the NUM as a union. It was out to break the NUM in order then to unleash a sustained, general offensive against the working class as a whole. Recognition of that idea was never at the centre of Scargill's political strategy. And therefore his attitude towards the TUC while being ambivalent was also extremely inconsistent. For about the first six months of the strike we saw a situation of where Scargill's message to the TUC was: keep your dirty hands off, this is our dispute, we know what you're like you bastards, look what you did to the NGA, look what you did to ASLEF we don't want your 'aid' thank you very much. On that level of course that is quite correct. But what this did not do was challenge the TUC; it did not challenge the other affiliates to the TUC to deliver anything other than hot air. And of course that is all they did deliver. In other words, when militants approached their leaderships, when Miners' Support Groups raised the question of a general strike, raised the question of industrial solidarity, the reply from all of them, from Ron Todd right over to Bill Sirs, was: the NUM has not asked us to do anything and therefore we will not do anything. That is not an exaggeration. That is a fact.

We in *The Leninist*, up to the TUC Congress or thereabouts, had raised the slogan: 'Demand the TUC Call a

General Strike'. Obviously, that demand had to be put forward by the NUM really in order to make it happen. It was obvious at the time of the TUC Congress in September that not only was a deal being hatched, but a rotten deal was being hatched. I remember being down in Brighton on the day of the Liaison Committee demonstration. Ominously instead of being outside the TUC it was several miles down the road, and the only people lobbying the TUC turned out to be the WRP, the SWP, a few *Leninist* sellers, and of course miners. But the Liaison Committee was miles away. Not only that, but Arthur Scargill, Peter Heathfield and Mick McGahey were closeted away in the famous smoke-filled room coming to a deal which in essence said: you deliver us a paper resolution and we won't rock the boat at the TUC. And that is what it turned out to be. We all remember Ron Todd's 'big bang' promise, the many fine speeches, but it was clear that all that was going to be delivered was hot air. Even as the votes were taken the engineering union and most importantly the electricians' union were saying 'we ain't going to deliver'. And it was obvious that it was not just they who were not going to deliver but all of them were not going to deliver. Why did Scargill go along with it? I think we already answered that to a degree. The fact is that he is a reformist and he is also a trade union bureaucrat when it comes down to it, a trade union bureaucrat who, however determined he is to see victory, whatever militant trade union tactics he is prepared to employ, is not prepared to see his links broken with other trade union bureaucrats.

'Scargillism'

Now when we look at Scargill and the whole idea of 'Scargillism' we can draw a useful lesson about the nature of Scargill. I do not think we want to be totally negative about Scargill. It would be foolish to say simply: 'Ah, Scargill: he's just another trade union bureaucrat, he's no different from the rest'. Because the fact is, he is different. And I think we can learn lessons about his strengths and weaknesses by perhaps looking at his hero from the 1920s: AJ Cook of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, who in many senses has great similarities with Scargill. Cook was an ex-member of the Communist Party; he was elected as a result of the wave of militancy that we have already referred to; he was supported by and a supporter of the National Minority Movement; he was still sympathetic to the young Communist Party; he looked upon the Soviet Union as his own. In other words, Cook was not just a normal, common or garden trade union leader in Britain in the 1920s.

But as we know he had his weaknesses. And his weaknesses were shown up in the aftermath of the 1926 General Strike, and above all they were shown up by his crumbling at the end of the miners' lockout and his desperate attempts to secure a compromise deal even though the rank and file were not prepared to accept it. And ironically he found himself — I will not say outflanked on the left, but certainly outdone in intransigence by the more traditional MFGB President Herbert Smith — I think his famous phrase was 'nowt for nowt': that was his intransigent negotiating stance. Not only that, but at the end of the General Strike and the lockout Cook, despite his earlier fraternal relations with the Communist Party, despite being a sympathetic ex-member, eventually turned against the Communist Party and the National Minority Movement. Now, I am not saying that that is what Arthur Scargill is going to do or anything like it, because the fact has been that after a year strike Arthur Scargill has not done that, Arthur Scargill has not done an AJ Cook. But the fact is that Scargill and militant syndicalism however intransigent and left however militant, cannot deliver the goods at the end of the day because in essence, what is behind the

capitalist offensive is the crisis of capitalism itself.

Ultimately the only way you are going to prevent an attack on the working class is to deal with the system that feeds that class war fighter in the Tory party, that is, Margaret Thatcher. It is that system that forces them to attack, and it is only by fighting that system as a system and starting to build the organisation to kill that system can you ultimately win. Even if Scargill had secured a victory it could only have been, in the best of all possible worlds, a temporary victory, a holding operation. It could not have been a strategic victory for the working class.

Now, that view of Scargill, that view of the strike should still be weighed against the fact that the NUM has not been smashed, that Scargill has not sold out the jobs of his members. So although the Tory government has spent £3 billion the NUM is still capable of fighting. And therefore for us, what is important in this period is correctly conducting a retreat, reorientating the NUM, winning the ideological battle, cementing unity: in essence equipping the NUM to fight another day. The fact has to be recognised that the NUM had been beaten, the NUM had been split down the middle, the bourgeoisie are in an immensely strong position.

Militant Minority

Although the strike ended in a very ragged way, the truth was, and it was an important truth, that the leadership has so far managed just about to keep the NUM intact. This struggle to keep the NUM intact in the immediate period is a key question. We should start orientating militants we are in contact with towards this task. At the moment, as we understand it, the militants themselves are extremely confused. On the one hand some simply want to campaign around the question of an amnesty for those in jail and those sacked. I think that would be a mistake if it is simply conducted as a one issue campaign. In Scotland they are going around with petitions, getting the church in, and all the rest of it; but that is not going to equip the NUM in Scotland or more importantly nationally for the fightback.

We have made clear in *The Leninist* for a considerable period now, one of the key lessons during the strike, and even more importantly now in the aftermath of the strike, is the organisation of the militant minority (and they are a minority now) in the NUM independently of their leadership. And not just the organisation of the militant minority for the sake of the organisation of the militant minority, but their organisation on a clear revolutionary perspective. And we do not mean by that making the militant minority in the NUM into an alternative Communist Party or anything like that, but the recognition that what is at stake is the struggle for working class rights, which can only be lastingly guaranteed now by the victory of socialism, only guaranteed by the destruction of capitalism. That recognition has to be won, because at the moment the militants themselves are extremely confused. They are in fact going around almost like a headless chicken. The Militant Miners' Rank and File Movement meeting which one of our comrades attended in Sheffield a few days ago as an observer from *The Leninist* was very confused and lacked direction. But we are not pessimists; we are very much well aware that even by organising a small number of militants in a particular area, the idea can grow. Because the idea of a national militant movement of miners is an idea that the time is ripe for. It does meet the needs of the struggle, and therefore once the idea is shown to be working, once it is shown in practice, other workers can pick it up with remarkable speed.

Once something is shown to work it becomes the property of the whole class: like flying pickets from 1972. The deployment of them and their success for the miners means that other

sections of the working class deploy them: I understand that even the teachers now employ flying pickets from one school to another. That gives you an idea of how new tactics and organisation become the common property of the class as a whole.

The Future

The second lesson which we can point to (which I have already indicated I hope quite convincingly) is that this strike is not as Ron Todd said, 'the likes of which we will never see for a hundred years'. He is trying to make it into a folk myth already.

A 'mantelpiece' strike to tell your children about: 'Eh, that was a strike', that sort of idea. The truth is, that 1926, yes, was the end of a period of militancy; 1984/1985 is a new period of militancy, a new period of militancy in which we will not just see strikes as bitter, but more bitter, more fierce, more dangerous to both sides. And that is a truth that needs to be rammed home time and time again. Not just amongst our own ranks but amongst the class as a whole. Because given the idea that the bourgeoisie is trying to force down workers' wages, we also have to bear in mind why, after 1926, it did not force home that offensive, why it was not forced to do a Germany? The fact was that during the pre-World War II period, Britain still possessed a massive Empire. OK, some of it had become a Commonwealth but nonetheless it had a huge trade area that encompassed a very large section of the world's population; what's more alongside that Empire it had dependent empires. For example, the Portuguese empire was very much under the wing of the great British Empire. The same could be said to an extent of the Dutch empire. British investments in places like South America were still massive and Germany lay defeated. Today, while Britain is still a major imperialist power it is now one of the weaker major imperialist powers. The fact is that it no longer has that cushion of an empire to fall back on. And therefore I think if you want to learn lessons about the past (without getting too carried away drawing exact parallels), but if you want to look at a country that we really ought to open our eyes to, and really say 'it can happen here' it is Nazi Germany.

Germany has got many important lessons for us, not only the idea that the working class will be forced to engage in very militant struggle, but that revolution can be placed on the agenda — and I am not talking about next year or in six months' time — but in the general period that lies ahead. And if we fail in that revolutionary project then of course the bourgeoisie in Britain would be forced to employ the same sort of methods as the bourgeoisie in Germany were forced to employ with the rise of Adolf Hitler and the triumph of Nazism. That is not scaremongering: that is a lesson of history that we need to take to heart.

Women

I have already mentioned the militant rank and file; many of them have learnt very important lessons about the nature of the state. After all, if your pit village is invaded by riot police, if your son is dragged off, beaten up by those police; if your picket lines are declared illegal by the courts; if your union has its funds robbed by those courts; if the Labour Party, instead of providing solidarity with the miners in their struggle, starts to join the other side and denounces the resistance that you are putting up; you learn some important lessons about the Labour Party, you learn lessons about the leadership of the Labour Party, the difference between the working class rank and file of the Labour party and its pro-capitalist leadership. You learn an awful lot of lessons about the state. Very few people in pit villages, certainly in Yorkshire, Kent, South Wales, Scotland, have got many illusions left about the benignity of the police force. You ask some of the women who were involved, who previously would have declared themselves, and certainly were,

'unpolitical', what their politics are now. The interviews that we have carried in *The Leninist* are an indication of the self consciousness, the political consciousness amongst women, who after all in pit villages in a traditional mining community were very unpolitical, did play a very traditional women's role. That role was turned on its head. Obviously there are questions of how long gains can be maintained, but nonetheless important lessons have been learnt by the women and not just a few militants but by a whole stratum of women engaged in struggle. Of course, this is not to claim that you have got out there tens of thousands of revolutionaries. I would not claim that at all. You have certainly got tens of thousands of people who have become politicised, and that is an important difference.

Anyway, as to other political tendencies, groups and parties I am not going into a whole list. I could be here all day doing that. We can divide them up relatively simply. On the right we have Neil Kinnock, Roy Hattersley and the like. Their view can be summed as 'thank God it's over, thank God that the opinion polls at last are starting to turn in our direction. What an embarrassment it was; the quicker we can bury it and forget it, the better'. This bourgeois fifth column has been joined by some we at this day school don't find surprising but nonetheless some workers might think to be strange bedfellows. What I am referring to is the left of the Labour Party and the leadership of the Communist Party. Now, I think the best way to prove this is the last edition of *Focus* I have not marked out the particular passages so I must do it from memory. I am sure that most people in this room have read the last edition of *Focus* — I am sure you know what I am referring to; the article was 'lessons of the miners' strike': on the one hand it says you have got *Militant*, the SWP, the NCP, and 'ultra-leftists' like that, who are saying that Willis and Kinnock have 'sold out', this the article implies is nonsense. That was the clear implication in the article. And I say 'implication' because the article was written in a deliberately vague way. What the leadership of the Communist Party was doing in this article in *Focus* was lining itself up with *Tribune*, with the Labour Coordinating Committee, and thereby with Kinnock. The idea that was for the CPGB leadership key in the strike, what was key to its failure was in their own words 'the inability of the NUM to project the strike as a national crusade over our industry'.

(...)

The description of the miners' strike dropping a three foot concrete post on the *British Road to Socialism* was first coined by comrade... and I think it is a very apt description of what has in fact happened during this strike. All their *BRS* dreams of feminism permeating working class women have been shown to be a myth. The truth has been that when working class women have been asked 'are you feminists?' the answer has been a blunt 'no'. And I do not think that is a result of ignorance; I really do not think that is a result of a Fleet Street idea of what feminism is. I think they can get an idea of what feminism is from exactly what the Eurocommunists want to impose on them by their understanding of feminism; and that is quite simply summed up by Greenham Common, the idea that women are somehow different from men on the basis that 'men are violent and women are peaceful', that men are the problem; that when you have got two groups of men together you are going to get a duff up like you saw on the picket lines; that if you put women there they would simply sit down and the police would not know what to do.

Of course the working class women learnt that the police did know what to do: they beat them over the head, dragged them away, and put them in jail. So I think that they did know what feminism was and they knew that they were not feminists. It's as simple as that. And what is more they also understood that part of the feminist ideology was the idea that men and

women should be fighting each other, and that women in essence should organise against men. What was very important in the strike was not only did these women fight alongside the men but the men themselves learnt many important lessons about the women's struggle, and about the importance of the politicisation of their women. Obviously there are going to be conflicts, obviously there are going to be antagonisms, obviously there is going to be a dragging back of many to the domestic role after this strike. But, nonetheless, important changes have taken place amongst the consciousness of the miners and the pit women themselves. If you want to look at how the strike has changed individuals, I think it is amongst women that you see the biggest, the most substantial changes. I mean if you go and talk to some of them now you really are talking to very politicised, very conscious individuals.

Other Groups

Anyway, as far as the reformist section of the working class is concerned, the lessons of the strike can be summed up as I said before as 'Never again'. But amongst what is called, I think reasonably legitimately, the revolutionary section of the working class movement, different conclusions have been drawn. It is worth looking at in particular the SWP, because in a way the SWP characterises in a more extreme form a number of other groups.

The SWP, quite brilliantly, at the beginning of the strike described it as "an extreme example of the downturn". And really throughout the year of the strike they kept repeating, 'This is the downturn, this is the downturn'. It took about six months for them to discover the positive side of Miners' Support Committees. And having previously denounced them as no good except for collecting baked beans and money, they then proceeded to become the biggest advocates of collecting baked beans and money on the planet. They became the arch-baked bean and money collectors. At the end of the strike, when obviously the strike was clearly in danger, they simply wrote it off as finished. Not on the basis of saying 'the strike is in danger, this is the way forward; we must make moves to defend to NUM'. Chris Harman, the SWP's second leading guru, described it in a way that put in a nutshell the SWP's position — and remember that this is when the strike is still on — when he wrote "this isn't 1925 or 1926, this is much more like 1927". And we all know what he meant by '1927': he meant that the working class had suffered a strategic defeat. Now, since the strike has been called off the SWP has issued the slogan: defend the unions — quite a correct slogan, but the practice of what the SWP means by it is going to the right. Every time the SWP talks about 'realism' what they really mean is 'we are taking another step to the right'. For example, at the Mineworkers' Defence Committee towards the end of the strike it was they who opposed the idea of solidarity action strikes. They certainly opposed the idea of a general strike. They did not just say 'this is not an immediate demand but we must fight for it' but they actively opposed it. In the aftermath of the strike what they have said that we must go and join with the bureaucracy to defend the unions. In other words, what they will be doing is opposing the organisation of the rank and file. So the great rank and file of the 1960s and 70s have almost stood on their heads and turned into the champions of the very bureaucracy that they once so fiercely denounced.

If you also look at another stratum amongst the revolutionary left I think you see the SWP in reverse, in particular I would point to the RCP (the Revolutionary Communist Party) and its paper *the next step*, and the Spartacist League — Britain and its newly revamped *Spartacist Britain* which is now called *Workers' Hammer*. These two groups played an interesting role during the strike.

The RCP is a group that really loves cheap publicity and therefore if they

can say something 'really different' it is a useful way of being noticed. They must have spent hours on their leading committees, not saying how shall we take this strike forward, but 'how are we going to be really outrageous and shock everybody?' Maybe I am being cynical. But suspect that there is at least an element of truth in what I say, because from the very beginning of the strike the key demand for the Revolutionary Communist Party was not the question of the general strike, was not the question of Workers' Defence Corps, was not the question of forming Miners' Support Groups and looking towards their transformation into something along the Councils of Action as we called for. For them the key, strategic question was the matter of a ballot.

Now we said in *The Leninist* in black and white that as far as we were concerned all talk about ballots being anti-proletarian, somehow being anathema to working class democracy is so much hogwash. We are not against ballots on principle. Anybody who suggests they are, as far as I am concerned, hasn't much understanding of the history of the working class. The fact is that ballots are legitimate. And I think we have to be quite frank: the fact that a ballot was not employed at the beginning of the miners' strike caused many problems subsequent to that. I do not say that everything would have been hunky-dory with a ballot, but nonetheless the problems (certainly in Notts) were exacerbated by it: it gave those who scabbed a banner to rally round. To suggest that that is not true is living in a fantasy world. I think we just have to accept that.

But that said, the fact that the NUM did not call a ballot, that it was not going to call a ballot, that not calling a ballot became almost an article of faith in the NUM itself; the idea of calling for one and campaigning for one as a strategic demand is as stupid as it is treacherous. Of course what the RCP were really out to do was to make themselves different from the rest of the left, to differentiate themselves from the NUM leadership to get shouted at by NUM militants, but at least they were being noticed. So the RCP calculated that by coming up with that slogan, yes, they would be unpopular, but my god the name of the RCP would be branded on the brain of every NUM militant during the course of the strike. And yes it has been branded on the brain of every NUM militant: the RCP is hated. And rightly so.

The RCP are characterised by the same thing that we can characterise the Spartacist League by and that is sectarianism. Now, we are a group that is often called sectarian, ultraleftist, and all the rest of it. But if you want to see sectarians in practice look at the Spartacist League, look at the RCP. During the strike both these groups took up a position similar to the SWP's attitude to Miners' Support Groups at the beginning of the strike. The Spartacist League and the RCP said they were Labourite-dominated, that they were only good for collecting money and baked beans. The RCP, for example, said 'they're a good idea — if only we'd thought of them'. And I think that sums up the RCP: that it is only if the RCP is in control of a picket, only if the RCP is in control of a solidarity campaign is it worthwhile. If someone else is in control of it is to be denounced, it is to be boycotted. As a result of this sectarian approach it organised its own pathetic pickets of power stations. Well, we know it is not going to make any difference except of course it is a good stunt that gets them publicity and outrages the local NUM, etc.

In a similar way the Spartacist League comes up with grand abstract demands. For example, it said 'form joint strike trade union defence guards'. In other words, its "fighting triple alliance" that was in fact to consist of five unions at the latest count was to form joint trade union defence guards. If there were five unions on strike, then why not? And why not integrate the unemployed, etc.? But the fact was there was only one union on

strike, unofficially from its rank and had been formed hit squads. But they did not even mention hit squads once in their paper, at least as far as I could see. In the same way, when we raised the idea of Councils of Action: in other words that Miners' Support Groups should consist of elected and recallable delegates: the idea that they would agitate and fight not only for money and food but also for industrial action was simply dismissed by the Spartacist League by saying 'Miners' Support Groups are Labourite-dominated; and after all, if they are Labourite-dominated they cannot get anywhere'. Well, I would like to inform the Spartacist League that the Councils of Action that Lenin called embryonic soviets were actually set up by the TUC and were most certainly Labourite-dominated. And was not the Petrograd Soviet of 1905, and certainly the Soviets of February 1917, dominated by Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks? Of course they were. The fact is the Spartacist League preferred their own abstract to a Marxist concrete view of the world.

The exposure of those sort of views came in the practice of what happened in Miners' Support Groups. When our comrades went along to their first Miners' Support Group meetings they were in an extreme minority. My god, we still are in an extreme minority. But the intensity of this struggle, given the fact that it has lasted a year, has given our comrades a very useful opportunity to engage in protracted argument with people who are not of our opinion. During the course of the strike many different sections in the Miners' Support Groups have moved towards the sort of position that we were advocating at the beginning of the strike. We have not seen a situation where Labourites have become isolated, but those very Labourites themselves have started to change, they have started to overcome their political illusions, many now have very few illusions about the likes of Neil Kinnock and are even questioning in many cases the worth of the Labour Party itself. Often their conclusion is: the Labour Party is shit, but look at your Communist Party.

Genuine Communist Party

Indeed all talk of Councils of Action, all talk of the need for a new National Minority Movement, all slogans for a general strike are all very well; and I think they were correct, not in the sense that we still call for a general strike like the WRP (they would call for a general strike whatever the situation), but for us the difficulty in achieving these aims shows the need for a genuine Leninist Communist Party. I think that lesson is something that is shown not just in the course of the strike but above all in the aftermath.

A good way of seeing the need for a Leninist Communist Party is to compare what happened in 1926 with what in 1984/1985. During 1925 the Communist Party, like every other section of the labour movement, was well aware that a general strike was in the offing. Instead of just waiting for it to happen like the TUC and Labour Party leadership did, the Communist Party was agitating and campaigning throughout that period, not only warning the working class that a general strike is coming, but demanding that the TUC and the labour movement prepare and that where the leadership was not prepared to take necessary measures then the rank and file must start taking matters into their own hands. Therefore the to see that Councils of Action were constantly being put forward in the *Workers' Weekly*.

Thus whatever limitations there were with the Communist Party in 1926, it was able to give the struggle a common strategic direction. It was able to see that Councils of Action coordinated.

The fact that a general strike was called was not as a result of the leadership of the TUC it had everything to do with the Communist Party itself. Tribute to the role of the Communist Party was paid by the

bourgeois state itself: during the nine days of the general strike half the original membership of the Communist Party suffered arrest. The Communist Party leadership were incarcerated throughout that entire period, along with the leadership of the National Minority Movement and the Young Communist League.

The differences with today are quite startling. Not just because of the role that the Communist Party of Great Britain played, acting as a cheerleader and often as a conservative brake, but also, and importantly, the extreme unevenness in solidarity, organisation, and approach, in both the support movement and the NUM itself. And I am not just talking about the differences say between Notts and Scotland. In other words, between an area characterised by the vast mass of people not going on strike, and areas that remained intransigent, that remained solid, but also within the militant areas themselves: the difference even inside Communist Party influenced areas. Take Scotland, Kent, and South Wales. The politics that were being put forward by the Communist Party in those areas varied. Take the difference between Pitt and McGahey, the attitude of Kim Howells, (no wonder he was suspended): there was no difference in party but the actual practice was significantly different. In Scotland the Communist Party not only in the NUM but in the broader trade union movement, played a very conservative role: demonstrations outside courts when miners had been arrested were banned by the NUM leadership; the mobilisation of non-NUM pickets was frowned upon, in contrast Kent went out of its way to mobilise people from London. We all know of the days of action, however unsuccessful they were, nonetheless it saw that a key question was mobilising other forces alongside it around power stations. So you saw a great deal of unevenness, not just between one area and another area, you saw a great deal of unevenness between one militant area and another militant area. This was exacerbated at the end of the strike. The fact that Kent comrades went up to picket out Yorkshire and South Wales, that militant miners went through Kent picket lines.

All that sort of confusion, all that raggedness and the problems that that caused, I think can be located when it comes down to it in the lack of a Leninist Communist Party. In the same way that confusion now exists amongst the supporters of the miners: shall we keep our Miners' Support Group going? If so, what role should it play? None of that has national direction and no single group that exists today, whatever grand claims they may make no single group has got the authority that the Communist Party had with the class in 1926. It was not just a question that the Communist Party had a few thousand members. After all, if we are dealing in numbers the SWP of today has got as many (or thereabouts as makes little difference) members as the Communist Party in 1925/1926.

The fact was that the Communist Party in 1925/1926 was a genuine communist party. It had firm links with the working class, it was a genuine vanguard of the class. So when we talk about reorganising a communist party, we do not just mean building a party of a few thousand that has got a correct programme. What we are talking about is a party that is the vanguard of the working class.

We are well aware that to build this party requires ripe conditions.

Comrades the fact is today, slowly but surely, and most heroically with the miners' strike with that year's struggle, we do not just see the beginning of a new period of militancy, but the raw material for that vanguard communist party being thrown up. This party must become a mighty weapon in the hands of our working class, without it the fate of Nazi Germany awaits, with it we have the possibility of realising our October. On to the Leninist Communist Party and the British Revolution.

THE 35th Congress of the Young Communist League (YCL), held on April 13 and 14, may be described as one of the most disgraceful events in the history of our organisation. The Congress met under a cloud of declining membership and relevance. The membership at the Congress two years previous had been 510, it now stands at 370, a decline of over 36% during a period which included perhaps the most important strike in British history. Out of the fifty odd delegates, the Euros had ensured a safe majority of around 10 but even then they did not feel strong enough to open Congress to YCL members and thus banned visitors under the pretence that the hall would not hold them (of course, it was half empty).

Polarisation

However, the Congress was not just characterised by decline but also by a sharp polarisation. This fact was most clearly illustrated by Euro comrade Simon Warren from Birmingham YCL when moving one of the main resolutions — 'The YCL facing the eighties.' He declared to the Congress that they had a clear choice between two types of politics — in one hand he brandished a copy of *The Leninist* and in the other a copy of *Our Future* (the programme of the League).

Between these two poles sat *Straight Left* and an amorphous centrist marsh who, given the forcefulness of the Euro assault and their majority, showed the weakness of centrist politics by compromising with, and even on occasion voting with, the Eurocommunists.

Straight Leftism and the Euros — again

The sharpest political debates were dominated by those branded as Leninists and the Eurocommunists, in between which the centrists, most notably *Straight Left*, vacillated. For example, on the women's question they stood by a Leninist position rejecting the

absurd position, put forward in the resolution actually adopted, that women are no longer part of the reserve army of labour. Yet on the question of the miners' strike, *Straight Left* effectively joined with the Euros in attacking a resolution condemning the role of the YCL leadership during the strike. *Straight Left's* attack was led by comrade Brett Kibble of Glasgow who (accompanied by Euro applause) called it a 'Beano' resolution because it condemned the majority of the leadership for the fact that the only propaganda that was produced was "a lamentable combination of pious charity mongering and crude cheer-mongering for the NUM National Executive Committee." This comrade obviously did not accept the idea that the role of the Communist Party and its youth organisation is to offer communist leadership, not just to collect money. Maybe there was even a twinge of guilt among comrade Kibble and his *Straight Left* General Council cronies that they had failed to put forward anything on this committee as to how the YCL should campaign during the strike. Moreover, the leadership's "proud record" on the strike was rewarded by the fact that there was not even a token miner to speak to the Congress, let alone any miners as delegates.

THE YCL CONGRESS

Our Future?

Despite only producing two editions of *Challenge* the Euros praised themselves for having "made a substantial contribution" to the miners' strike.

Challenge

Challenge did not appear for the last seven months of the miners' strike. Predictably, the Euros blamed the membership rather than themselves by claiming it was due to branch debts. But since when did a communist paper ever pay for itself through sales? The excuse was shallow but significantly neither the Euros nor the *Straight Leftists* accepted the argument that in such a situation genuine communists would have donated back some if not all of their wages. (The YCL fulltimers earn £6,500 pa). As comrade Peter Byrne (see letters) put it, the YCL may have been without propaganda during the most historic strike this century "but Brian Jones, the National Organiser still manages to buy a new leather jacket." (How much are leather jackets nowadays, comrade Jones...?).

Communist self sacrifice is yet another 'nutty ultra leftist' idea to these cynical bureaucrats.

Peace

Again on the question of peace, the Euros and the *Straight Leftists* agreed in essence, only splitting hairs over the British Peace Assembly. Indeed, such was the Euro ferocity against those they branded as Leninists that the *Straight Leftists* even cowardly refused to vote for a Tower Hamlets (North) YCL

resolution that merely stated that young communists should unconditionally defend the USSR against imperialism's war drive and that "those who dominate the leadership of our YCL have failed to do this and have objectively placed themselves in the camp of anti-Sovietism."

So-called pro-Soviet comrades like Sophia Young, Brett Kibble and Kenny Fee could apparently without conscience, vote against this resolution. So it should come as no surprise then that the *Straight Leftists* joined with their Euro 'enemies' in giving a standing ovation to the anti-Soviet speech of the Youth CND speaker.

Ireland

The Congress managed to pass a resolution on Ireland which insults the intelligence of anyone that knows anything about Irish history.

Ridiculously, the resolution states that Sinn Féin (ie. the republican movement) should "re-integrate themselves into the republican tradition in Ireland".

Moreover, it displays the social-chauvinism of its authors, and indeed of the Euros and *Straight Leftists* who both voted for it, by stating that the armed struggle objectively aided imperialism. Rather than acknowledging the truth — that the IRA is the most constant

and painful thorn in the side of British imperialism — these opportunists hide their chauvinism through a very thin veil of dunderhead theorising.

Whose Democracy?

Perhaps the most appalling aspect of the Congress was that despite the fact that the main resolutions stressed the need to appeal to "anti-authoritarian youth" they refused to debate whether it was correct to call the police on other communists (see box).

Indeed, comrade Doug Chalmers made clear the Euros' understanding of democracy in the debate on *Challenge* (which made a surprise appearance after 8 months). This understanding means that *Challenge* is to be opened up, like *Marxism Today*, to a liquorice allsorts of British politics. However, when it was suggested that this freedom of debate be extended to the membership of the YCL itself the Euros described this as 'social-democratic' and 'against democratic centralism'.

These liberals of course have no knowledge of the fact that in Lenin's party all shades and factions had access to the Party press and also had representatives on the leadership, for example the Left Communists and the Workers' Opposition. But in reality what these Euros are operating is bureaucratic centralism and this meant that with their carefully stage-managed majority they ensured that the new General Council excluded all those suspected of having even the slightest criticism of the Euro regime. This new trimmed down General Council consists of 18 'pure' Euros.

Despite this we can predict with confidence that this new 'homogeneous' crew will soon be at each others throats with the aspirant Euros attacking the staid bureaucrats and the feminists attacking everyone. Under this leadership the remorseless decline of our once proud YCL looks set to continue.

Chris Kincaid

The Banned Resolution

AT this Congress one comrade appealed against his expulsion. The events which surrounded this expulsion and the way these were dealt with at Congress fully exposed the degenerate level to which our League has sunk under the Euro leadership. For those unfamiliar with the case, here is a brief summary of the events:

In April 1983, comrade Paul Clark is recruited to the League. His branch, Hackney, is defunct with no branch secretary. Paul recruits relatively large numbers of young people (around 25.) Paul is given cards by the National Organiser and London Secretary to recruit them. Doug Chalmers attends a meeting with these new recruits who want to elect Paul as their branch secretary. Chalmers quickly becomes aware of the fact that this large branch is not a Euro one (it contained a variety of 'lefts') and he tries to close the meeting. Days later every one of these new recruits receives letters from the YCL Executive Committee (equivalent to the Party's Political Committee)

informing them that they are not members of the League and inviting them to 'reapply' — no explanation is given as to why they are in fact not members of the League.

During the period that these recruits are meant to be 'reapplying', a Hackney YCL AGM (one had not been held for two years) is suddenly announced. Paul, as the elected secretary of Hackney YCL and still without an explanation for the disenfranchisement of the vast majority of his branch, mobilises them to attend the AGM along with the two London representatives to the General Council, comrades Mark Lewis and Calvin Tucker, to observe events.

Paul and his recruits refuse to leave the AGM without a reason for being debarred. Chalmers refuses to give an explanation and eventually carries out a threat to remove these comrades from the meeting by calling the police.

For refusing to allow his branch to be disenfranchised, comrade Paul Clark is expelled. For defending these young

communists against the Euros and against the police, comrade Mark Lewis is expelled.

Comrade Mark Lewis appealed to the Congress against his expulsion. His old branch, Tower Hamlets (North), put a resolution to Congress on the political implications of the events surrounding this expulsion. This resolution was disgracefully never seen by Congress delegates because the majority of the General Council, acting as the Euro censor, ruled it out of order. Moreover, so intent were the Euros on burying the issue that they refused to have any debate on the question at Congress, indeed, judging by the laughter that greeted the delegate that proposed such an outlandish thing, they seemed to regard it as something of a joke. Needless to say the expulsions were reaffirmed by 35 votes to 7 with 8 centrists effectively joining with the Euros by abstaining. Below we reprint the resolution which the Euros were too scared to discuss and ask the question — in a genuinely communist

organisation, who would be the people being kicked out of the League, comrades Lewis and Clark, or 'Chalmers of the Yard' and his filth loving Euros?

The Crisis in the YCL

"Over the last two decades or so YCL membership has dropped by well over 90% and in recent years, despite the intensification of the class struggle, the rate of decline has accelerated. In many areas the YCL is not even a paper organisation, indeed there is a great danger that the very existence of our organisation is in jeopardy.

Instead of fighting tooth and nail to reverse this decline by mobilising the YCL around the miners and standing full square with the Soviet Union against the imperialist war drive those that dominate the YCL have devoted their energies to ensuring that they keep their positions and their stranglehold over the YCL — going so far that they have even forbidden branches to have basic

Marxist education classes.

Instead of democratic centralism being used to unite the YCL membership around the politics of revolutionary Marxism-Leninism those who dominate the leadership have employed bureaucratic centralism to crush all who voice disagreements with them. This went to the obscene level of 'police centralism' when General Secretary Doug Chalmers called the police to eject 15 young communists from the Hackney AGM in 1983. That six of these comrades were black, that the police in Hackney are notoriously racist with the death of Colin Roach on their hands, Chalmers's calling of the police and his subsequent engineering of the expulsion of two of the ejected YCLers can only be described as criminal. This incident alone reveals the full extent of the political crisis that dominates our League. It is our duty to halt the degeneration by changing the political direction of the YCL and giving it genuine revolutionary leadership."

The Communist Party

SHOULD WE SPLIT?

AT THE Glasgow meeting recently held by comrades expelled from the London Communist Party, the message issued to the Party EC, as projected by the *Morning Star*, was "Unite and reconcile around the *British Road* at the Special May Congress". Furthermore, one of the main speakers, comrade Tom Durkin, declared: "I want to repudiate most emphatically any allegation that we are for a split in the Party" (*Morning Star* April 1 1985).

The fact that these life-long and by no means 'extreme left' Party members are openly campaigning in this manner is proof of both the profound crisis within the Party and the potentially healthy nature of the anti-Eurocommunist rebellion; yet their message also illustrates the dilemma and confusion of the majority of communists who have lined up behind the Chater faction at the *Star*. The Communist Party is disintegrating because the reformist policies pursued by its leadership in line with the *British Road to Socialism* are finally being exposed as bankrupt and impracticable in the new conditions of class war being opened up by the Thatcher Government. However, the 'cure' for the Party's illness being prescribed by comrade Chater and his unprincipled centrist followers like comrades Photis Lysandrou and John Foster is none other than more of the same poison.

It is precisely these politics, the politics of the *British Road*,

which have led the Eurocommunists to their own liquidationist conclusion, and which comrade Chater concurred with until very recently.

If a Communist Party is gutted of its revolutionary ideology and objective, and this has certainly been the case in our Party for at least thirty years, then it is only a matter of time before that party crumbles as an organisation. By obstinately sticking to the *British Road*, those comrades supporting Chater retain the very cause of the Party's crisis and thus do not pose any real solution. These comrades' plea for unity with the Euros around the *British Road* is already an impossibility. Their differences with comrades Jacques and

McLennan are already too deep and too numerous to bridge. Given the fact that many other comrades have already rightly rejected the *British Road* as revisionist, it would seem there is even less of a durable basis for unity within the forces opposed to the Eurocommunists.

Our Communist Party is therefore confronted with the very serious danger of disintegration as it approaches the Special May Congress and the June AGM of the PPPS with the rapid dissolution of any ideological cohesion. At least four major factions exists, including *The Leninist* and *Straight Left*; and the EC and *Morning Star* factions both contain at least two further sub-factions forming alliances on a

'tactical' and unstable basis. The prospects for the Party could quite easily soon become those of the Communist Party of Spain (PCE), in which even the Euros are busy tearing each other apart.

For Leninists, the complete disintegration of the Communist Party would be a grave and historic setback. Although the Party has long since dumped the bulk of its Leninist legacy, it still remains for us the most important focal point in the struggle to reforge a genuine Communist Party. No 'theoretically correct' group or sect can possibly obscure the fact that the Communist Party today retains links with the mass working class movement, is a rich storehouse of class

experience stretching back over sixty years, and still stands as a vestige of Leninism in that it formally remains part of the 90 million strong world communist movement.

Of course Leninism must eventually part ways with all forms of opportunism, as was the case with the Bolshevik Party. However, this was prepared over a protracted period of political and ideological struggle, unlike the amateur attempt of the NCP to produce an 'instant' Party in 1977. When Lenin and the Bolsheviks finally split from the Mensheviks after nine years of uneasy "co-existence", they had already won over the core of tried and trusted Party cadres and had won a truly mass base in the working class movement as a whole. The inner-Party struggle between 1903 and 1912 had in fact been a "school of life" for communists, demonstrating the bankruptcy and treachery of opportunism through political practice — something no sect that merely "throws theory at the workers' heads" can do.

It is for these reasons we state that the best path for Leninism to develop is in the hot-house of the Communist Party — even as it presently exists. The Communist Party — even its name — belongs to the tradition of Leninism; it is our duty not to split from what is ours, but to rid it of the opportunist infestation which is now eating away at its body like a writhing mass of maggots. It is for this reason that we oppose any moves

Is this the Marxist-Leninist vanguard Party? No, it's the NCP.



A sorry tale of failure

John Chamberlain (former NCP National Organiser)

WHEN the New Communist Party was formed it was promoted as a "new beginning". But this was not to be; the NCP swiftly became inconsequential in the workers' movement and now contents itself with the grandiose self-delusions so common in sect politics.

So startling, so transparent, so total, has been the failure of the NCP that the Euro/McLennan faction hold it up to the Party membership as a chill warning of what the CPGB would become if the opposition ever captured the reins of leadership. Even the *Straight Leftists*, old stablemates of those who formed the NCP, use similar scare tactics in their arguments about the danger of a split. Despite this it is a fact that the NCP, certainly its carefully cultivated pro-Soviet image, is still attractive for some genuine communists. Because of this it is important to examine what the NCP was and is and why it has suffered its sorry fate.

The decision to split from the CPGB in July 1977 before the 35th Congress in November was taken on purely organisational grounds. Sid French and Eric Trevett were, it seems, to be confronted at that congress with irrefutable evidence of their factional activity, which

having been presented would duly lead to their expulsion. This carefully leaked threat and provocative moves to "re-organise" their precious Surrey District panicked them into an almost instant split.

There were no pamphlets, no unofficial papers, no honest polemical articles in the Party press presenting their political strategy and the need for an immediate schism; certainly there was nothing remotely resembling open ideological struggle.

A meeting was arranged for July 16 in London's Conway Hall to which anyone in the know could turn up. In the ensuing confusion and with little real debate it was decided to form the NCP.

Despite the amateurish, even cowardly way the NCP came into being the fact was that by October 1977 it could boast of 64 branches and around 700 members: as such it was the largest split from the CPGB in its history to date. What is more, because of the gallop of the McLennan leadership further and further to the right, the maybe yes, maybe no dithering of certain centrist leaders, who in the end remained to fight "against the split, against the draft", their ideologically threadbare arguments about why it was correct to stay put in the CPGB, the NCP took many youthful and left centrist elements from the opposition.

As a result of this and the general revolutionary euphoria in the wake of the victory in Vietnam and the overthrow of fascism in Portugal, the NCP — despite the conservatism of the old Surrey District Secretary and Organiser (who neatly became the General Secretary and National Organiser of the NCP) — found itself pushed to the left. Thus the NCP rejected as reformist the so-called Alternative Economic Strategy, it declared itself for proletarian revolution, and after some initial shilly-shallying it characterised the struggle in the Six Counties as a war of national liberation.

But such correct positions were inevitably compromised by the centrist physiognomy of the NCP and its philosophical poverty. Having no sound scientific class outlook on the world doomed the NCP to impotence and pleading to others for political action. Of course this tailism manifests itself first and foremost in the attitude of the NCP towards the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which they project as a semi-divine institution, the fountain head of all wisdom, and the supreme arbiter of truth. But while such idealistic neo-God building may be reserved for the CPSU, the NCP also considers it their communist "duty" to tail the official labour movement in Britain. Because of this it now

desperately looks to secure its future by becoming a respectable and legitimate affiliated section of the Labour Party — the bourgeois party of the working class — an aim which has forced the NCP to attack the CPGB contesting elections not just today but right back to its very foundation. A similar spineless position is maintained when it comes to the TUC and CND. So the NCP is a parody of a genuine Marxist-Leninist vanguard party despite all its pompous claims.

This was most sharply exposed during the course of the miners' Great Strike. The NCP hardly stirred from its sluggish routine. As far as they were concerned it was business as usual. Their paper *The New Worker* remained an eight page weekly, and more importantly it constantly found itself way, way behind the left reformist leadership of the NUM who in the main saw the strike purely in narrow trade union terms.

And such is the love of the NCP for the venal labour bureaucracy that in the April 5 1985 edition of *The New Worker* the call is made for the TUC traitors and scabs who have just exposed themselves by their disgusting role in the miners' strike to "redeem" themselves by leading the anti-Tory fightback. It doesn't even enter the heads of the NCP that those who declare themselves THE Party, THE vanguard ought to

fight for the leadership of the working class themselves. The fact that the NCP doesn't — at least when it comes to real life and not their dry as dust education classes — only goes to show the bankruptcy of their founding claim to be a "new beginning".

Under the grey, uninspiring leadership of Eric Trevett (who took over as General Secretary after Sid French's death in 1979) the NCP has declined precipitously. We are told that its now torpid membership hovers at the 250 mark and sales of the deadly dull *New Worker* have sunk well below 2,000. Feeble mindedness the controversy raging in the CPGB only warrants an arrogant "told you so" sneer; and while attempting to give itself an identity and possibly finance for fulltime functionaries by making the USSR into a fundamentalist religion, the NCP has developed a shameful sideline in promoting the witch-hunting of Trotskyites in CND and the Labour Party, lining up with the openly pro-imperialist right in demanding "urgent measures" to "remove Militant's leaders" (*The New Worker* September, 24 1982).

Today the NCP stands as a (just about) living lesson, not of the folly of splitting as some like to claim but of the practice of centrism.

which will exacerbate and further the process of disintegration and liquidation.

How then can we prevent a split?

To simply state that we oppose splits, as both the Chater faction and *Straight Left* do, is not necessarily enough. The Straight Leftists claim in their internal factional bulletin *Communist* that Chater and the "London 22" are secretly and underhandedly trying to provoke a split; but this is hardly the point even if it were true. We have argued that both *Straight Left* and the *Morning Star* are liquidationist, not because they admit to as much, but because the logic of their political orientation makes them so. Both publications are committed to developing 'broad work' which rather than giving communist leadership to the working class and recruiting the best militants to the Party, results in communists submerging themselves in the reformist morass of the labour movement without a trace. Tony Chater's opening shot against the Eurocommunists two years ago concerning "an outside body" was no slip of tongue, although he undoubtedly squirms with embarrassment whenever it is mentioned. It expressed his true attitude that a *commercially viable* daily paper based on the 'broad labour movement' (read reformist) had, for him, become more important than the question of Communist Party control over that paper.

If comrade Chater had used the *Star* as a weapon in an inner-Party rebellion against opportunism and Eurocommunism, then that would have been unquestionably different. Lenin was also quite prepared to break with the Mensheviks' control of leading committees and to do so publicly with his own press; but never would he simply counterpose a "paper" against the "Party" as comrade Chater has done. Comrade Chater's position, whether he admits it publicly or not, is ultimately and objectively leading to a split between the *Morning Star* and communist politics altogether. It is the unrelenting logic of this objective process which characterises Chater as a liquidationist and not whether he is actually aware of the implications of his own actions at the time.

For Leninists, neither the bankrupt *British Road* nor the

commercial viability of the *Morning Star* can provide the basis for pro-Party unity against the Euro-liquidators. The real basis for this must be a principled and determined effort by all wishing to defend the Party to use any political means possible for the removal of the Eurocommunist wreckers, and to lay the foundations for future comradely debate and action in rebuilding our Party. It is in this context that *The Leninist* called on comrades as early as January 1984 not to recognise any bureaucratic and factional expulsions by the Euros and to rebel against Eurocommunist factional discipline in an organised manner. We were therefore the first to warmly welcome the healthy and defiant rebellion of the London Party in defending its rights against Eurocommunist gerrymandering and swindling.

Yet the Leninists are the only oppositionists to defend *all* expelled comrades in a consistent and principled manner. The Chaterites narrow-mindedly condemned the four *Straight Left* comrades expelled after the 38th Congress as "getting what was coming to them", whereas *Straight Left* endeavoured repeatedly and hypocritically to carry out Euro-like acts of exclusion, expulsion, and factional discipline against non-Straight Leftist oppositionists in the YCL and Camden Borough Party, despite the claim in its factional bulletin *Communist* to support unity within the ranks of the anti-Euro opposition.

Due more to its conservatism than to any genuine pro-Partyism, *Straight Left* is committed to the formally correct policy of "No to splits", a position which it held for the same mechanical reasons when it opposed the formation of the NCP in 1977. This is because *Straight Leftism* looks back with damp eyes to the days of monolithic Party unity under Harry Pollitt and Stalin, but is not quite sure how to reestablish such a state of affairs in the present day and age, short of the Soviet Party instructing comrade McLennan to hand over the reigns of power to comrade Nicholson.

Endeavouring to follow their own inane and formalistic logic, the Straight Leftists declare that "official party decisions should not be flouted" (*Communist: Don't Split* —

Organise!), meaning Eurocommunist decisions to expel communists and to close down District Congresses must be meekly accepted. This has consequently led to Straight Leftists joining the Eurocommunist walkout from the London District Congress and from Party meetings where expelled comrades are present, causing many comrades to draw a parallel with "scabs". It is not surprising that the Straight Leftists find it difficult to get anybody to take them seriously when they pontificate about 'unity', 'principle' and 'pro-Partyism', as it is an untrustworthy centrist faction imbued with the methods of pubroom conspiracy bureaucratic manipulation, and liquidationism.

Typical of their starch-encrusted formal approach the Straight Leftists declare in *Communist*: "While there is any possibility of change, while congresses are still held, all splitting moves must be resisted." It is because *Straight Left* is so totally and inflexibly committed to "winning the Party"

through Congress that forces it to "play by the rules". But what happens when the Eurocommunists make it impossible for the opposition to win by gerrymandering; what happens when an opportunist leadership prevents the convening of Congresses?

This situation could be upon us quite soon. The Eurocommunists will undoubtedly make every effort to sew up the Special May Congress and use it as a launch pad for a massive purge.

The Straight Leftist strategy is a 'blind alley' in that there is no option but to leave once it becomes impossible to operate according to the rules. On the other hand the Leninist strategy of going beyond the formal discipline imposed by a ruling opportunist clique suffers no such limitation. In the Communist Party of Turkey (CPT), the opportunists could impose virtual arbitrary rule, having prevented a Party Congress from being convened ever since 1932. The response of the Leninist opposition when it first emerged in 1978/79, only to be formally 'expelled', was simply not to accept it. The

Leninists of the CPT now constitute a majority of the Party after having organised a rebellion via the Coordinating Committee and are presently preparing for the Fifth Party Congress, fifty-three years after the Fourth was held.

Our Communist Party is entering a decisive period in its history. The pressure of disintegration and liquidation are immense, but they must be resisted if the struggle for reorganising the Party is to be strengthened. Comrades in the London District have taken an important step forward in placing the anti-Eurocommunist rebellion on a higher footing. Yet the only truly principled and revolutionary tendency capable of carrying that rebellion through to completion, namely Leninism, is still precariously weak. It is imperative therefore that we draw fresh militants and revolutionaries into the Party on a Leninist platform in order to strengthen the inner-Party struggle against opportunism and liquidationism.

John Mann

Two Sides of Straight Left

COMMUNIST:

don't split -

ORGANISE!

THE Straight Leftists' secret factional bulletin has, over the past months, given the followers of 'Harry Steel' the line on the miners' strike, giving it a prominence somewhat in contrast to *Straight Left* itself which usually relegated what it has called "for a year the main political event in Britain" to short articles and snippets on the back page. It is in *Communist* that we find the more 'left' looking, the hard 'Mr Hyde' face of Straight Leftism, its open attacks on the present *British Road to Socialism*, and heady talk of overthrowing the state, revolution, and class war; stuff obviously not thought fit for public consumption and inclusion in the fake 'broad labour movement' paper *Straight Left*. However, the thinking reader of *Communist* can easily discern the cracks in that 'hard' face.

Take the question of violence. "Violence has always been an integral part of the class struggle, and our ruling class is ever ready to use it. It has traditionally been a weapon of the working class as well... In this context the death of the Welsh taxi driver is to be regretted despite the voluntary nature of his scab work. Yet we should not flinch from realising that to transfer power from the capitalist class in Britain will undoubtedly require a readiness to accept and apply violence." (*Communist*, December 1984) This is areally breathtaking piece of either sophistry or perhaps if we are generous confusion. Violence is alright in principle for the centrists, it is fine in *State and Revolution*, but when the working class actually applies it against the State forces or scabs, the Straight Leftists' regret (which in essence means they condemn) the killing of a scab and consistently refrain from giving unreserved support for the violence of striking miners. Violence is OK in theory, in the future, but when faced with workers' action now in practice they flinch from backing it. Not surprisingly this 'hard left' has never given any communist leadership to striking miners on

how to combat the police attacks, they have never called for the formation of Workers' Defence Corps, though no doubt they would maintain it was correct for communists to campaign for them in 1926. In *Communist* (January 6, 1985) they state that "...as the crisis is aggravated more workers will be propelled into active struggle and the use of state force and coercion is likely to increase." Will increase we would amend. The article then pronounces that "We should be prepared," but of course does not say *how*! All Straight Leftism has to offer on this score is to recommend Lenin's *State and Revolution*; well worth reading, yes, but such important theory must be linked to practice, to the needs of the class struggle today and in the future, and in practice this means the political struggle for the key idea and for the actual formation of Workers' Defence Corps.

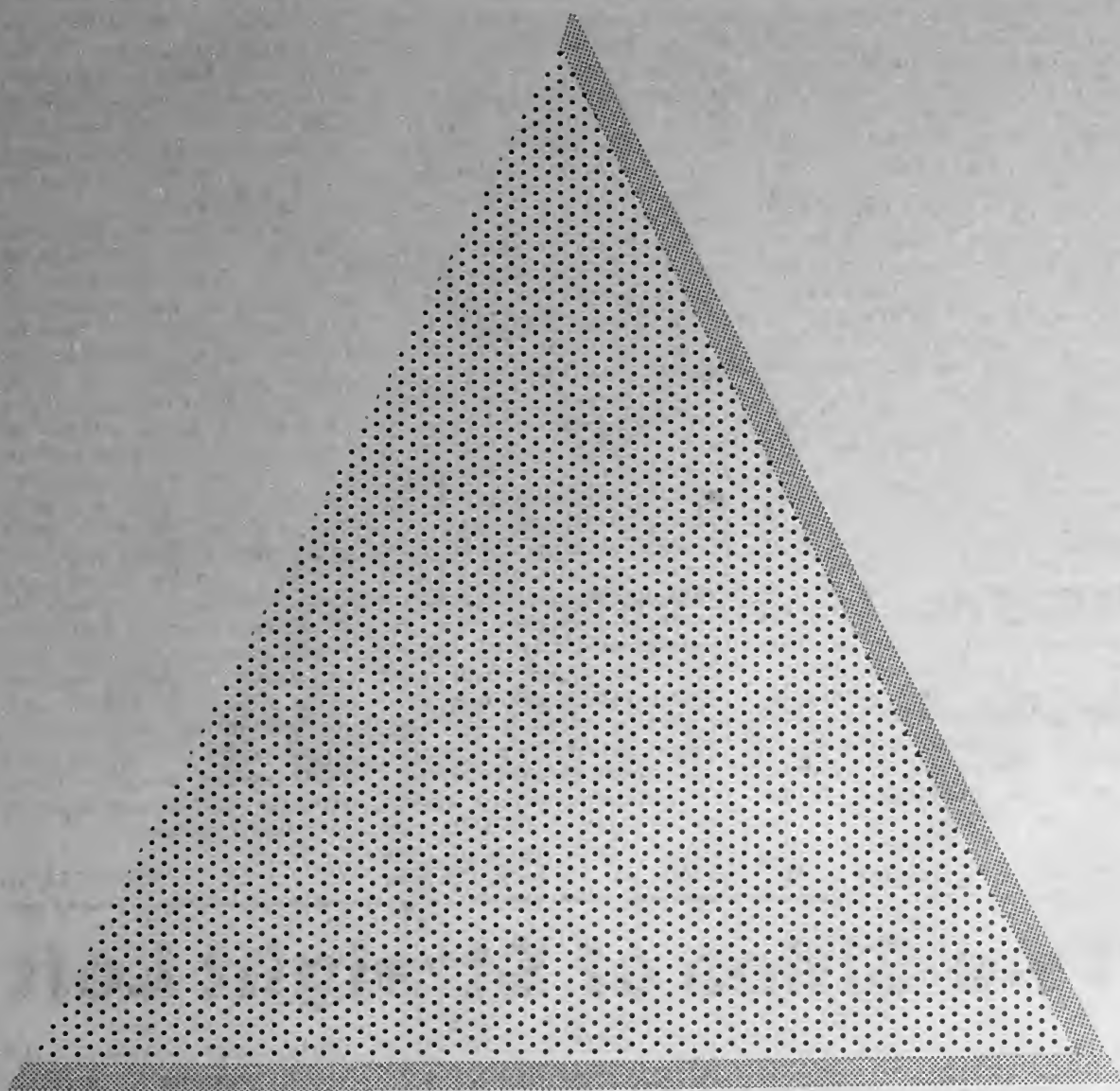
Straight Left's flimsy facade of revolutionary rhetoric and the reformism it attempts to conceal can both be seen in *Communist* on the question of solidarity with the miners. Whilst the collection of food and money receives expected prominence, we also find *Communist* reminding its circle of supporters and contacts that "...the winning of solidarity strike action and the full implementation of the TUC's policy must be kept firmly within our sights." (9 November 1984). Moreover, the January 5, 1985 edition *Communist* stated categorically that "action (i.e.

withdrawal of labour) is the key to winning the strike." The truly remarkable thing is that throughout the strike, Straight Leftists were seen to argue *against* the demand for a General Strike or mass solidarity action of such proportions in Support Groups and trade union bodies. And in the same edition of their samizdat *Communist* they attack "Trotskyite groups" who were making such "repeated unrealistic demands on trade union bodies..."! Finally, with brilliant timing, *Straight Left* in the March edition finally broke from their equivocation, vagueness, and confusion and came right out with it: "Open the second front now" it demanded, to be followed by this incredible admission of its faulty political position during the strike: "Many of us concluded or discovered a year ago that we couldn't bring our fellow workers to the point of strike action in support of the miners. But if we had known then what we know now, we might have set ourselves to win that conviction over a period of three months or six months." If these comrades had gone beyond their shallow analysis of the capitalist crisis and had actually developed a Marxist-Leninist understanding of the crisis and its political consequences then perhaps they would have realised the strategic importance of the Great Strike and campaigned for a general strike over the past year.

The miners' Great Strike has been a test which the *Straight Left* faction has failed badly. Though claiming to be good 'quartermasters' for the miners they have in no way managed to win the respect of militant miners or those in the Support Groups for their political positions. Both their written positions, whether in *Communist* or in *Straight Left*, and their practice have lain bare the bankruptcy of their centrism. As Lenin once wrote, centrism is truly "revolution in words, opportunism in deeds."

John Miller





Defending the Oppressed

GENTLY humming 'Onward Christian Soldiers' under their breath, the new moral right are on the march. One issue after another is pulled out of the hat to inflame public opinion and hysteria. AIDS, herpes (remember herpes...), late abortions, contraception for under-agers, all are the new raw material for the backlash of the anti-sex right. The witchhunt of 'deviancy' is a trans-Atlantic phenomena; in Britain police raid the Gay's the Word bookshops in Bloomsbury carting off hundreds of 'obscene' pieces of literature, while in Reagan's America, abortion clinics across the country are literally under firebomb and shotgun siege from Christian terrorist 'pro-life' nutters. As the imperialist system moves into deeper and deeper crisis internationally, the ruling class tools up for anti-Soviet holocaust abroad and attempts to impose its anti-human and perverted morality on working class women and the oppressed at home. But how ready is the working class movement to meet the onslaught?

The Gay Plague

The bourgeois media-induced hysteria over the 'gay plague', Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), has targetted gays not as the principal victims of this terrible disease but as the source of a strange and awful 'plague' on society. Undoubtedly the disease seems to be more prevalent among the gay community — over 70% of its sufferers in the United States and Britain are homosexuals. AIDS, however, appears to have originally sprung up amongst heterosexuals in Central Africa; from there to the small Caribbean island of Haiti (again not exactly the 'gay centre' of the universe) and only from there to the gay communities in the USA.

It is a little difficult to identify

the common social characteristic of this disease and there seems to be some confusion over how exactly it is spread. It seems highly unlikely and just a product of the bourgeois scaremongers that the disease is contractable through saliva or semen: blood appears to be the active agent and this certainly would account for the greater susceptibility of gays given the higher incidence of blood in homosexual acts.

The ruling class, however, has sought to promote the notion of AIDS as a form of divine retribution for 'questionable' sexual practices. Perry Worsthorne, pet *Daily Telegraph* bourgeois 'red-neck' and Harry Steel's (of *Straight Left*) favourite polemical butt, recently gave God's line on the disease in his column. AIDS, apparently, is attributable to "the promiscuous sexual practices which until recently were condemned by both Church and State as perverted and unnatural, not to say grossly unhygienic."

Not to say terribly 'un-British' and subversive also. It is not simply the ga-ga bourgeois witch-finder generals like Worsthorne who have been working themselves into a lather over the insidious threat to civilisation represented by anal intercourse. Respectable pillars of the bourgeois establishment have had their twopennies worth as well. The British Medical Association's advice to gays appears to be — no sex, please:

"Ironically, despite all the uncertainties this disease (like genital herpes, which has also attracted much attention in the American lay papers) is essentially preventable. The abandonment of promiscuity, homosexuality, and drug abuse could eventually stop both these diseases in their tracks — though this is hardly likely to prove an

acceptable solution.'" (*British Medical Journal* 1984).

Hardly. The message to gays is from the medical fraternity 'have sex, but be prepared to die for it, queer.'

The chastity 'option' is also pushed by various gay radical help agencies and left individuals. For example, comrade Peter Jacobs, writing in the Eurocommunists' *Focus* of March 28 advocates cosy, gay monogamy and pseudo-bourgeois marital one-to-one personal relationships. Comrade Jacobs in fact gets quite prim and proper in his advice to his fellow gays, who he presumably sees as non-stop fornicators:

"...the spread of the virus is inextricably linked with promiscuous sex in the vast majority of cases, and to avoid facing this issue plays into the hands of the moral majority."

"In my opinion, the only way to safeguard the social gains that gays have made in the last twenty years is for a much more conservative lifestyle to evolve, based on permanent one-to-one relationships and the 'scene' must be abandoned."

Although comrade Jacob's reactionary garbage was refuted by his fellow Euro gays, Steve Bindman and Richard Barker, neither one of these comrades could really effectively kill Jacob's arguments. This is because they must inevitably accept in essence comrade Jacob's initial premisses. If you regard gay liberation as a question of 'personal' politics and of changing 'straight' attitudes and not a question of social revolution, logically then you fight AIDS hysteria and the disease itself not by preparing to smash the bourgeois state which enforces gay oppression, but by changing one's lifestyle.

Queer Bashing

For every action there is an opposite and equal reaction,

and they don't come much more reactionary than comrade Charlie Poulsen replying to comrade Jacobs in *Focus* of 11 April, giving some centrists' view of sexual liberation:

"I think it will be a grave error for the Party to associate itself officially, or to join up with those groups of introverted people obsessed with sex... that call themselves 'gay' (though for most of them 'miserable' would be a truer name) and lesbians. I cannot imagine why they should consider their private sexual habits have anything to do with class struggle and the battle for socialism, except to sidetrack it into collusion with the many members of the ruling class and the establishment who share this 'gayness' (or should it be 'gaiety') with them."

Comrade Poulsen's 'not-in-front-of-the-Party' stance is a flimsy cover for the kind of anti-gay, anti-woman chauvinism that dominates the centrists in the Party for the most part. For these comrades, 'working class politics' equate with accepting every sectional prejudice and backward attitude that infects our class. Comrade Poulsen and his co-thinkers' attitudes have a long pedigree of course. With the victory of the centrist current headed by Stalin inside the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the 1920s many of the social gains made by working class women and other oppressed strata began to be eroded. In 1934, 'pederasty' was banned. Homosexuality has remained illegal in the Soviet Union from that day and is officially castigated as a 'bourgeois perversion'.

Thus, it went something like this. Lenin and the Bolsheviks abolished the barbaric Tsarist laws against the male homosexual act; Stalin made it illegal again. We would ask comrade Poulsen and his centrist comrades how they imagine their crass chauvinism has anything to do with revolutionary Bolshevism?

A Class Question

For us, the liberation of gays and working class social revolution are inextricably linked in much the same way as the women's question. With the development of capitalist industry there were two contradictory social consequences. In the process of freeing people from patriarchal social relations to enable them to constitute an unfettered labour market for capitalism, the family as the social prop of feudal society was undermined. Economic freedom from the family enabled to a certain extent the development of some sex relationships.

On the other hand, however, homosexual or lesbian relationships implicitly represented a threat to the basic economic unit of capitalism — the nuclear family. They are thus portrayed as 'unnatural' or 'perverse' and as capitalist society slips further and further into economic and social degeneration, attacks on gays will inevitably increase. The bourgeoisie has responded to the crisis by attempting to throw the responsibility for social provisions onto the backs of working class families and especially the women in those families. Gays by their very nature represent an alternative to the sanctity of motherhood and the family.

Anti-gay hysteria is a

component part of an attempt to stitch together a rapidly decaying social fabric and to protect the notion of the modern bourgeois family to ensure that it remains able to fulfill its economic functions for capitalism.

The gay question is a class question and the defence of gay rights is a matter for the entire working class movement.

Quango City

A recently published book on the gay question from the radical Trotskyite left is typical in many ways of the malaise facing the British gay movement. The first few lines of *Gay Liberation in the Eighties* by Gough and Macnair really say it all:

"In 1983, the Labour controlled Greater London Council gave £¼ million to set up a lesbian and gay centre in London... This was the first time that a British government institution has allocated a really substantial sum to meet the specific needs of gay people." (p.1).

The gay movement of the '60s and '70s, with its incoherent, individualistic politics was easy meat for the Labour Party left with its quango web. The bourgeois state and its handouts are looked to to liberate gays and lesbians, not the revolutionary working class. The fact that 'Red' Ken Livingstone occasionally makes teasingly ambiguous little 'does he/doesn't he' speeches about his sexuality and that his GLC is liberal with the cash handouts will not defend gays. They need revolutionary politics, not Labour Party tokenism.

The Future

Beneath the veneer of relative tolerance, bourgeois society fosters some dangerously sick anti-gay prejudices. 'Queers' will be identified no longer as the clowning, mincing 'nancy-boy' of 'Are you Being Served?' or the inoffensive 'Queen Mum' drag artist of Boy George. The yellow press is setting gays up as a sinister unclean sore on the body of society: gays are being set up for a massacre.

The petty bourgeois separatism of the gay and feminist women's movement has been a response to what they have quiet correctly perceived as the chauvinism and backwardness of the labour movement and the British left. We would argue however, that only working class politics can effectively defend and ultimately liberate gays:

- Not the so-called 'working class politics' of the 'her indoors' centrist brigade in our party. For comrade Poulsen and those in the Party who think like him, it's evidently lights out and grit your teeth for an attempt to impose hetero-centrist orthodoxy between the sheets. No, that is not our idea of 'working class politics'.

- Nor do we want the 'working class politics' of the 'revolutions-on-the-rates quangoites of the GLC. That can only sow divisions and encourage the fatal isolationism of the gay movement.

We call on all working class gays to join us in the struggle for working class state power and a society where the only criteria for sexual relations is consent and human love. That is our type of 'working class politics' — the type that will ultimately liberate all of humanity.

Ian Mahoney

REVIEWS

By Your Friends...



The WRP prefers Euros to Costello, Hicks, and Chater

Alex Mitchell, *Behind the Crisis in British Stalinism*, New Park, June 1984, pp.128, £2.00.

THE CRISIS in the Communist Party of Great Britain has attracted the attention of political commentators from all sections of British society. The *Financial Times* political editor Malcolm Rutherford waxes lyrically about the "well-edited, and brightly presented" *Marxism Today*. The *Guardian's* Peter Jenkins also joins in the praise for the mouthpiece of Eurocommunism, and Channel 4's *A Week in Politics* informs its viewers about the origins of *Straight Left*. And despite having long ago dismissed the CPGB as dead if not buried, all

publications commonly called the "left press" have been forced to carry extensive articles on it, not least the Workers' Revolutionary Party using its colour 17p 16-page daily *News Line*.

The fact is that the CPGB is no isolated sect which ludicrously declares itself *The Party* when its membership passes the dizzy heights of one thousand. The issues at the heart of the debates in the CPGB are not the esoteric hair splitting exercises that tear apart all Trotskyite groups at one time or another, nor the rivalry of big mouthed, big headed, leaders so common to these "parties". No, what is at the root of the crisis in the CPGB is the basic contradiction in the workers' movement bet-

ween reform and revolution, a contradiction which far from being peculiar to Britain affects all in the world communist movement.

Alex Mitchell's pamphlet draws on his numerous articles in *News Line* on the crisis in the CPGB. It contains a wealth of useful information, detailing in a blow by blow fashion the crisis as it unfolded, starting on August 26 1982 and comrade Mick Costello's *Morning Star* diatribe attacking *Marxism Today* for its shop stewards "perks and fiddles" article by Euro comrade Tony Lane. Indeed his knowledge about the inner workings of the Party, access to the letter written by YCLers Sioned-Mair Richards and Sue Bradley to the Executive Committee justifying the calling of the police on 15 YCLers (six of whom were black) at the 1983 Hackney YCL AGM, and tittle tattle about the Swiss skiing holiday taken by Martin Jacques, Pete Carter, Philippa Langton, and Bob Rowthorne, must lead one to speculate about whether the WRP have a spy working at 16 St John Street or some high up Euro mole.

But while damning all tendencies in the CPGB — the Euros, the pro-*Morning Star* groupings, *Straight Left*, and *The Leninist* Mitchell slants his analysis and introduces innuendo to favour the Party EC and the Euros; thus, while Tony Chater whines and is apologetic, Jack Ashton thunders. So although

cretinously claiming that the Euros "represent that wing of the Soviet bureaucracy which advocates capitalist restorationism" (p.5) and more accurately that *Marxism Today* is "soaked in bourgeois ideology" (p.15), Mitchell and the WRP call for these very Euros and the EC to "act without delay" in order to regain "political, editorial, financial, and administrative control of its own newspaper" (p.35). Using arguments about the sanctity of formal democracy it is declared that the EC "has every right to take political decisions and insist that members on the PPPS and the *Morning Star* editorial board (sic) carry them out" (p.26).

The reason for this is simple. For the WRP, "Stalinism" (that is, the world communist movement) is the "most consciously counterrevolutionary force" in the workers' movement; and to clear the way for workers to flock (at long last) to the banner of the so-called "Fourth International" (or at least Gerry Healy's version of it) and the WRP, "Stalinism" must first be destroyed. To do this they support the Euros in the belief that a victory for them will speed up the process of disintegration in the CPGB, an idea not without an element of truth, this being one reason why we consider the Euros the main enemy.

But contorted reactionary reasoning is typical of the idealism and sectarianism of the WRP. It is an organisation which while never tiring of pouring forth vile anti-communist and anti-Soviet lies

takes great delight in publicising and promoting fake lefts like Ken Livingstone and Ted Knight, excusing their shabby manoeuvres, and defending them against criticism. Hatred of the Soviet Union and the world communist movement even led the WRP to justify the execution of communists by the Iraqi Ba'athist regime and when it came to Poland they had no trouble in supporting the capitalist restorationist Solidarnosc and its counter-revolutionary leader Lech Walesa. When Arthur Scargill rightly called Solidarnosc "anti-socialist" it was the WRP which initiated the red baiting of him, carefully timing their campaign to coincide with the 1983 TUC.

Perhaps most obscenely but nonetheless logically the WRP insists on lining up with that reactionary butcher Ayatollah Khomeini, comparing his Islamic regime with the Russian workers' state ushered in with October 1917. In a similar fashion the WRP has aligned itself with Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, concluding a "united front" with him in August 1977 — rumoured by some to be the key to the colour in *News Line*, its cheap price, and its daily appearance.

No wonder the WRP can only recruit politically ignorant recruits. No wonder it tries to keep them in the "party" and on the boil with theatrical talk of imminent military coups, the existence of a revolutionary situation, and Tory Bonapartism. No wonder Alex Mitchell sides with the Euros.

Jack Conrad

New Tasks; New Goals

R. Yürükoğlu, *The Disintegration of Fascism*, İşçinin Sesi Publications, pbk, pp.153, £2.50

THE ability to correctly and maturely analyse a new stage of the struggle and to systematically draw the necessary lessons from that analysis is the hallmark of a Party that approaches its revolutionary tasks seriously. Since its inception, the *İşçinin Sesi* (Leninist) wing of the Communist Party of Turkey (CPT) has been almost alone in the world communist movement in its ability to make sober, realistic assessments of political trends and developments. The disintegration of Turkish fascist monolithicism, looked at in detail by comrade Yürükoğlu in this book, presents the *İşçinin Sesi* organisation with new tasks, both theoretical and practical.

There were a number of factors which underlay the disintegration, or 'wearing down' of the fascist regime, some general and some more specifically applicable to the Turkish experience. In general terms one may say that when fascism accomplishes the immediate need for its coming, that is the solution of a revolutionary crisis negatively by the crushing of the workers' organisations and the imposition of a regime of naked bourgeois terror, it will inevitably start to die of its own

accord. This general feature was enhanced in Turkey by the fact that the junta in effective terms had a very restricted mass base, which was further restricted by the continued economic crisis.

Also, because of its medium level of capitalist development, and its consequent reliance on Western imperialism, Turkey has a general need to gain the acceptance of the Western bourgeois democracies. This, combined with a certain upswing in the economies of the imperialist nations in late 1982, was one of the key factors underlying Turkish fascism's tendency to disintegrate. This process has also been observable in other medium developed capitalist nations dominated by reaction: Chile is the most obvious example in some ways; in Argentina and Bolivia, of course, the regimes have already gone and as comrade Yürükoğlu points out, matters are rapidly moving to a head in the Philippines.

Comrade Yürükoğlu describes the beginning of this complicated process:

"The economic crisis [i.e. the junta — RH] was unable to solve became deeper and the situation was not relieved by the false statistics published for the benefit of the IMF. The conditions of the working masses sharply deteriorated. Thus since the junta's mass base, which had been narrow in any case, shrank even more

under these circumstances, the inauguration of the 'transition to democracy' manoeuvre [i.e. the adoption of the constitution — RH] brought with it the beginning of the process of disintegration of fascism." (p.23 — Emphasis in original.)

Bourgeois rule in Turkey is now in a process of transition. It can no longer be spoken of as fascist, and the character of the regime is being mainly determined by the fact that there are 'partners' emerging to share power with the core of the junta administration who remained intact despite the authoritarian changes brought in by the 1980 coup. Inevitably, however, the relationship between the two groups is not a static one — the junta is forced to share power regardless of its wishes and there is a "continuous expansion of the sphere of the civilian political forces." (p.48)

The interregnum, however, cannot be a permanent state of affairs. The regime must be in a transition to something. Stable bourgeois democracy as we have pointed out before in *The Leninist* is impossible in Turkey, as it is in most medium level developed capitalist countries. Their relationship to imperialism and the characteristics of these countries' insertion into the world economic system predetermines that crisis is structural to their economic and social systems. Thus:



The role of the masses has been crucial in ending fascism.

"For this reason the permanent alternatives which confront Turkey until there is revolution remain two: either fascism or revolution." (p.81)

Given the new prevailing conditions, the task that *İşçinin Sesi* now sets is to win the masses. It would be easy to fetishise and, in Lenin's words, raise the level of struggle against the opportunists in the Menshevik wing of the party to a 'sport', but that would be to renege on your revolutionary duty to the working class.

İşçinin Sesi have not fallen into that trap and they note confidently:

"The mutually complementary new stages that have been reached both by Turkey and by our party present the party with a single goal: to win the masses."

In many ways the publica-

tion of comrade Yürükoğlu's book comes at a watershed not simply for the comrades of the Leninist wing of the Communist Party of Turkey but also for the Turkish revolutionary movement as a whole. The disintegration of the monolithic state structure that has held safe capitalism in Turkey for three long years will pose new problems and new opportunities to revolutionaries. Those organisations and individuals who have touted themselves round Europe for the last couple of years almost as 'professional exiles' will have to face the job of orientating themselves back towards Turkey. It will sound the death-knell for most of their pretensions. The *İşçinin Sesi* wing of the CPT on the other hand is squaring up to its revolutionary tasks with confidence.

Alec Long

Towards the 39th Congress

THE SPECIAL 39th Congress of the Communist Party of Great Britain was called by the Euro/McLennan faction in order to bludgeon the growing opposition into submission. On the basis of a congress rubberstamp they will demand an end to all oppositional activity and that Party members vote for their faction's candidates at the June 9 AGM of the People's Press Printing Society (the cooperative which own the *Morning Star*) in order to erode comrade Chater's hold over the Management Committee. As well as this a not insignificant section of the Eurocommunists are openly hell bent on precipitating a major split in the Party that will see all opposition forces, variously described as "Stalinist", "sectarian", and "fundamentalist", either voluntarily walking out or being kicked out via a sweeping post-congress purge.

With a thoroughly 'purified' CPGB the Euros hope that not only will they be able to dominate the Party machine by easing out the McLennanites but that they can get on with the job of rewriting the *British Road*, infusing it with all their new popular front, anti-'Thatcherite' class collaborationism. In essence this would mean the transformation of the CPGB into a radical petty bourgeois rump for which even Euros like comrades Dave Cook and Jon Bloomfield can only really envisage the role of a neo-

Fabian "think tank of the left".

Of course, first the 39th Congress must be won. And to ensure this the Euro/McLennan faction is pulling out all the stops. For £30,000 or thereabouts *Focus* has been launched as a weekly and will be sent to every Party member gratis until the congress; bureaucratic centralism is crudely employed to expel, suspend, or bar dissident voices; and pivotally, gerrymandering is being conducted on a massive scale to prevent an opposition majority.

While gerrymandering is sometimes carried out by blatant cheating most of it relies on District Committees. They are entrusted with the task of grouping branches for the purpose of electing congress delegates. And as most District Committees are by fair means or foul in the hands of the Euro/McLennan machine it is consummately easy, and indeed fully within the carefully written rules, to gerrymander.

This is universally recognised by the opposition. There is thus a widespread feeling that the 39th Congress is, bar a fluke, more or less a formality — its result certain. Because of this the grouping around the *Morning Star* is increasingly adopting a "couldn't care less about your rules" attitude. This has resulted in:

- The expelled leaders of the London District Committee stomping around the country with their "Calling all

Communists" meetings. (Unfortunately, despite these meetings being billed as open to "all communists" stewards demand to see Party cards, except no doubt from those on the platform: a narrow approach which leads the organisers of these meetings to attempt to prevent those who are known to have a different oppositional view from themselves from making a contribution even from the floor.)

- The *Morning Star* has become an openly factional platform printing numerous letters from pro-*Morning Star* groupings and more significantly relatively long polemical articles from comrades Chater, Ramelson, Rothstein, Page Arnot, and even Gerry Cohen, as well as "aspiring intellectuals" like Photis Lysandrou and Jeff Sawtell.

- *Morning Star* Readers' and Supporters' Groups are being established in every town and area in truth to provide an alternative structure for the paper now that 16 St John Street have branded it as factional.

For the Straight Leftist these developments are far from welcome. They rightly fear that the pro-*Morning Star* grouping is being manoeuvred into a split. But instead of recognising the contradictory results which are inevitable given the extent of degeneration of our Party — the rejection of bureaucratic centralism and the drift

towards the liquidationist abyss, etc. — they desperately, even frantically, fight to confine the erupting inner-Party struggle within the safe banks of formal democracy and the rule book, gerrymandering and all.

This blinkered conservatism is epitomised by the pre-congress letter to *Focus* by comrade Jennifer Bolgar (April 4 1985). Because we have a sneaking suspicion it was not written by this comrade but some Straight Leftist grandee it can be assumed to express that faction's "official" view. Attacking comrade Nidge Tovey for his suggestion that the opposition should orientate itself towards *Morning Star* Readers' Groups, not the fixed 39th Congress, the letter declares that this is "playing into the hands of those who want to split and destroy the Party." Apparently for the Straight Leftists a revolutionary party can "only" be built when "the great majority of CPGB members are convinced"; this laughable nonsense is for them "the only way to secure communism's future."

Here we have in black and white not only the Straight Leftists' ideological poverty, their centrist fear of the inevitable confusions and dangers of a real inner-Party struggle, but their utter lack of a serious let alone a realisable plan for building a revolutionary Communist Party. Yes, it is true that the *Morning Star* Readers'

Groups are no substitute for such a party; yes, there are great dangers in the course being plied by the pro-*Morning Star* grouping; but to suggest that the opposition should concentrate on convincing "a great majority" of an inactive, increasingly right wing, and rapidly declining Party membership, is a Sisyphean-like sentence for an eternity of futile and never-ending toil.

For Leninists the battle to reforge the CPGB has only just begun. We do not base our strategy on winning an arithmetic majority of Party members, let alone a "great majority", and unlike comrade Fergus 'no to the split' Nicholson we don't have wet dreams about overthrowing the well entrenched Euro/McLennan faction at one of their gerrymandered, stage-managed congresses. No, we look to the class struggle itself and the task of recruiting the best elements thrown up by that struggle on an openly Leninist basis: this providing the key to building a Leninist CPGB.

Our perspective welcomes rebellion against the bureaucratic centralist regime. It recognises that it is both correct and inevitable that rebellion will see the construction of organisational forms outside the restrictive formal structure of the Party, and not just *Morning Star* Readers' Groups but a Leninist wing of the CPGB.

Jack Conrad

Chater's Ally Pally Rally

PERHAPS COMRADE CHATER is intending to use his fortieth anniversary of the victory over fascism rally as a launching pad for what will become a split using the presence of numerous foreign communist leaders to give it international legitimacy. Certainly he will use it to reorientate his supporters in the aftermath of the CPGB's 39th Congress and rally them for the fight at June's crucial PPPS AGM. But whatever the real purpose of his Ally Pally jamboree over May 25-26, comrade Chater's pronouncements promoting it expose his deep rooted opportunism.

For the Soviet state, people, and Communist Party the fortieth anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany will quite justifiably be marked with full solemnity. After all, not only did twenty million Soviet citizens die in the war with Germany but the Soviet Red Army smashed Hitler's war machine and showed the superiority of

the socialist system in the process. Because of this, workers and communists everywhere will rejoice at the successful defence of working class state power represented by the Soviet Union's victory.

But to celebrate Britain's role in World War II is a different matter, no matter how much this is interlinked with the Anglo-Soviet wartime alliance. To confuse the anti-fascist form of the war fought by Britain with its imperialist essence is a fundamental political and philosophical mistake. And this is exactly what comrade Chater does. Announcing his proposal for the rally he wrote: "Our people made enormous sacrifices, and at one time stood out alone against Hitler's plans for world domination." (*Morning Star* January 14 1985.)

No one would deny the deprivation, the death, or destruction endured by the British people. But the war fought by Britain was an imperialist war; yes, against German imperialism's (and

not just Hitler's) "plans for world domination", but this was in order to preserve Britain's world dominant position, its continued suppression of hundreds of millions of colonial slaves: it fought for this — not because anti-fascism, let alone love of democracy. In other words, for Britain this war was in essence exactly the same as the one it had fought twenty-five years earlier against the same foe.

Of course, the full weight of the propaganda machine was used in both cases to convince the masses that they were fighting a people's war. They were naturally promised the earth by silver tongued politicians — Lloyd George conjured up visions of a land fit for heroes, while for Clement Attlee the carrot was the so-called welfare state, and of course in both cases these cynical demagogues talked of a new world order of peace and plenty.

Such lies were ruthlessly

exposed by Lenin and other genuine Marxists during World War I. They declared that peace could only come by turning imperialist war into civil war and that only socialism could guarantee an end to war in general. They were tireless in showing the masses that the reformists who refused to recognise the necessity for revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat were creatures of the bankers, the plutocracy, and the merchants of death who acted as recruiting sergeants for their wars of plunder and conquest. Above all, Lenin in particular scientifically proved that far from being a mere policy for imperialism, war was a burning necessity forced upon it by the very inner logic of the capitalist system itself.

Comrade Chater denies these truths when he ludicrously says: "we could have been spared the arms race, the murderous weapons of mass destruction, and the massive

waste of resources" if the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union had been maintained. He even suggests that with the continuation of this inherently temporary alliance world problems of "hunger, famine, and backwardness in general" could be overcome.

So while calling himself a Marxist-Leninist comrade Chater peddles the most nonsensical, reformist twaddle. Does he really believe that the Anglo-Soviet alliance could have continued after 1945, does he really think that world imperialism could somehow stop being warlike, does he really imagine that peace and progress can come without socialist revolution? Evidently he does. And as such comrade Chater stands exposed not merely as a non-Marxist, but when stripped of his so very recently acquired "pro-Soviet" veneer we can see he is nothing but a common run of the mill right opportunist.